



# Beginner's Manual on Digital Marketing and E-Commerce



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# Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Form
AD	Advertisement
ADR	Alternate Dispute Resolution
Alt	Alternative
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ATM	Automatic Teller Machine
AVS Code	Audio Visual Code
B2A	Business to Administration
B2B	Business to Business
B2C	Business to Consumer
B2E	Business to Employee
B2G	Business to Government
BIS	The Bureau of Indian Standards
BSTI	Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution
C2A	Consumer to Administration
C2B	Consumer to Business
C2C	Consumer to Consumer
CAB	Consumer Association of Bangladesh
CMS	Content Management System
CPSC	Consumer Product Safety Commission
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CVV	Card Verification Value
DSD	Disputes Systems Design
DSS	Data Security Standard
DTH	Direct to Home
EG	example
ETC	Et cetera
EMV	Europay, Mastercard and Visa
EU	European Union
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
GA	Google Analytics
G2B	Government to Business
G2C	Government to Citizen
G2G	Government to Government
GCC	General Certificates of Conformity
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GIF	Graphics Interchange Format
GMB	Google My Business

GWT	Google Webmaster Tool
HTML	Hyper Text Markup Language
IBAN	International Bank Account Number
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ID	Identity
IG	Instagram
IP	Intellectual Property
IP	Internet Protocol
JPEG	Joint Photographic Experts Group
LLC	Limited Liability Company
LLP	Limited Liability Partnership
M2C	Manager to Consumer
NID	National Identity Card
ODR	Online Dispute Resolution
P2P	Peer to Peer
PCI	Payment Card Industry
PNG	Portable Network Graphics
PPC	Pay Per Click
QR Code	Quick Response Code
QSA	Qualified Security Assessor
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SERPs	Search Engine Results Pages
SKU	Stock Keeping Unit
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMM	Social Media Marketing
SMO	Social Media Optimization
SMS	Short Message Service
SSL	Secure Sockets Layer
SVG	Scalable Vector Graphics
SWIFT Code	Society for worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication
TDR	Transaction Discount Rate
TEAS	Trade Electronic Application System
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific
URL	Uniform Resource Locators
US	United States
USP	Unique Selling Power
WWW	World Wide Web
XML	Extensible Markup Language
XR	Extended Reality
ZIP	Zone Improvement Plan

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) is the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in the Asia-Pacific region. The Commission promotes cooperation among its 53 member States and 9 associate members in pursuit of solutions to sustainable development challenges. UNESCAP is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations.

The UNESCAP secretariat supports inclusive, resilient and sustainable development in the region by generating action-oriented knowledge, and by providing technical assistance and capacity-building services in support of national development objectives, regional agreements and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

First published in April 2022 by UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office

Photo credits :

Cover photos: ipopba/ istock; filadendron/ istock; Kong Ding Chek / istock; Kanawa\_Studio/ istock; triloks/ istock

Module 1: ipopba/ istock; Module 2: filadendron/ istock; Module 3: SrdjanPav/ istock;

Module 4: triloks/ istock; Module 5: ipopba/ istock;

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# Foreword



The process of globalization and trade liberalization brings positive as well as negative impacts. In South Asia, trade liberalization has focused on supporting the export sector which has had a differential impact on women and men. For many women it has resulted in fewer opportunities than men to enhance their capacities and competitiveness in the changing markets, or to move up in the production hierarchy. They continue to remain working in the lower order of the value chain.

Despite showing robust economic growth over decades, South Asia faced unprecedented challenge due to COVID-19. The economic growth did not necessarily lead to empowerment of majority of women, who continued to be marginalized. Women entrepreneurs in South Asia face many challenges in expanding their businesses and becoming part of regional and global supply chains because of lack of knowledge and the scale of their businesses which are primarily micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME). Accessibility and reach provided by the potential of e-commerce can be a powerful tool for bringing greater gains to the women entrepreneurs as it addresses the outmoded barriers of geographic isolation and limited access to information and financing. Knowledge regarding e-commerce and how technology may be leveraged to meet business needs is lacking among most women entrepreneurs in South Asia. For women entrepreneurs, especially those with small e-commerce businesses, access to ICT can bring additional information resources and open new communication channels, particularly for marginalized communities. Examples from other developing countries illustrate that women entrepreneurs using ICT technologies can find new export markets, reach a more significant number of potential clients, secure a higher number of orders, and cut overheads and setup costs by enabling more efficient business practices. It has the added benefit of allowing women to work from home with flexible timings, helping them address the social distancing constraints of the pandemic.

In recent years, e-commerce has seen exponential growth across the world and has inarguably increased the ease of doing business. The phenomenon has dramatically changed the way business is conducted these days and has brought a greater opportunity for entrepreneurs, including those from the margins, to excel and explore global as well as regional markets, thus empowering them. In the last decade, the number of start-ups has increased manifold, experiencing a major shift in the way business is conducted.

This manual on digital marketing and e-commerce has been designed especially for beginners and is a step-by-step guide for entrepreneurs to conduct online business. Through five modules, the manual comprehensively outlines and illustrates how to successfully commence an online enterprise and market the same from start to finish for any individual who wishes to.

The manual can be used by existing as well as potential entrepreneurs, policy makers and civil society organisations to understand the various stages and processes involved in digital marketing and e-commerce. We sincerely hope that users will find it useful and easy to understand.



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and Officer-in-Charge of the South  
and South-West Asia office,  
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# Preface

The South and South-West Asia office of UNESCAP, New Delhi, India is implementing a project titled “E-commerce Capacity Building for Women-led SMEs in South Asia”. The project is funded by the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), WTO, Geneva and aims to enhance the knowledge and capacity of target women entrepreneurs in the application of e-commerce and digital marketing platforms to expand their local and international business and participate in local, regional and global supply chains. This project focuses on women entrepreneurs from South Asia, especially the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), who have limited knowledge on how to use IT tools to promote their businesses. To fill this knowledge gap, this manual has been developed with the objective to assist the start-ups, women entrepreneurs and others in creating their businesses, product profiles as well as using digital tools and platforms to expand their business.

Beginning with an introduction to e-commerce and listing the objectives, the first module describes the basics of e-commerce and digital marketing including the different types and how to create business accounts on multiple online platforms. The second module entails exploring wesellonline.org, an e-commerce portal for entrepreneurs to register on. Additionally, it provides in-depth information on operating the dashboard and registering the bank details. The third module elaborates on how to market the products using e-commerce portals, including wesellonline.org, and entails product cataloguing, image optimization and inventory management options that the portal offers. The subsequent module discusses payment methods, legal procedures and online disputes – the awareness and understanding of which are an indispensable part of every business venture. Lastly, the fifth module delineates registering with various online portals.

Though this project is for South Asia, but the knowledge products developed including this manual can be used by any user from any where in the world. We hope that the guidance on digital marketing and e-commerce provided in this manual will add value in expanding their businesses. We are also confident that this manual will be useful for many other agencies who are training or organising capacity building programme on e-commerce for various stakeholder.

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# Acknowledgements

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**Beginner's Manual on Digital Marketing and E-Commerce** was prepared by the South and South-West Asia Office of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP SSWA), under the overall direction and guidance of Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna Deputy Head, of UNESCAP SSWA. The draft was prepared by Ms. Deepali Gotadke, Consultant of UNESCAP SSWA. The draft was further worked and edited by Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna and Ms. Suveera Saxena.

The report was prepared as part of the project “E-Commerce Capacity Building for Women-led SMEs in South-Asia”. The report benefitted from comments and inputs provided by staff members of UNESCAP, namely Rupa Chanda, Robert De Jesus, Witada Anukoonwattaka, Sudha Gooty, Deanna Morris, Swayamsiddha Panda and Kanika Gupta. Shahid Uddin Akbar, Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development (BIID), Bangladesh and Arpita Mukherjee, Professor, ICRIER, New Delhi provided valuable inputs to the manual. Ritam Gupta and Utkarsh Kumar, interns of UNESCAP SSWA assisted in compilation.

Dr Ratnakar Adhikari, Executive Director, EIF and Ms. Hang Tran, EIF provided valuable inputs and guidance for this manual.

Raju Rana, Uma Rao and Rakesh Raman of UNESCAP SSWA provided administrative support.

Dana Savannah MacLean edited the manuscripts. The cover, layout and graphic design were developed by Dong Xiao and Yin Qi.

# Introduction

The world economy has grown steadily over the last decade, and globally the gender gap in the workforce is narrowing. However, this progress saw a setback by an estimated two years due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> Many people believe successful businesses require a full-time commitment from entrepreneurs, and that part-time businesses – or those operated from home – will not be successful. The e-commerce business provides an opportunity to women entrepreneurs to start and expand their businesses while working from home along with flexible timing that enables them to create their own schedules, including managing a competing household and childcare responsibilities while participating economically. The e-commerce industry has brought the world to their doorsteps with the consumers and sellers being just one click away on the computer.

The flexibility and technological ease of the internet now allows women entrepreneurs to conduct businesses entirely online. In layman's terms, e-commerce is engaging with trade and commercial activities online through electronic devices. Therefore, all transactions conducted through a website, via email orders, or another form of electronic communication fall within the realm of e-commerce. Marketing using a website, Pay-Per-Click (PPC) ads, e-mail, or any other form of electronic communication is considered digital marketing. The confusion between digital marketing and e-commerce comes from the fact that digital marketing and e-commerce share many of the same tools, although the way they use these tools are different. For example, a website, e-mail address, or social media account can all be tools for marketing and direct sales. However, while digital marketing and e-commerce are related processes, e-commerce usually begins where digital marketing ends.

In an age in which online shopping is the norm, digital marketing takes the forefront of online business – creating content specifically targeted to populations who already need and want the products being advertised. Digital marketing is a support function, while e-commerce is the actual business. While digital marketing enables businesses to attract customers, e-commerce and its related platforms and transactions are what actually makes it happen. In South Asia there is no dearth of skills among women to manage small or medium enterprises, but rather a gap or vacuum in the technological know-how to conduct an online business. With a small boost in capacity and the efficient use of information and communication technology, women can reach new heights of entrepreneurship.

A multitude of online platforms offer aspiring women entrepreneurs' virtual marketplaces where they can easily market their products. This training manual aims to introduce the basic concepts of digital marketing and e-commerce so that women entrepreneurs are equipped to carry out their online businesses and achieve their business goals. This manual is a step-by-step guide on how to start an online business to provide practical, hands-on training for women entrepreneurs, and can be used for future uses by any entrepreneur. The manual introduces existing e-commerce platforms and demonstrates how to set up an online business. For this purpose, a live demo portal has been developed, on which it is even possible to generate orders based on enquiries. The manual includes critical components for online startups, including how to register businesses and products and link businesses to bank accounts.

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<sup>1</sup> PwC Global (2022). PwC Women in Work Index. Available at <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/news-room/press-releases/2022/women-in-work-index-2022.html>

## Minimum requirements for the course

In order to benefit from the use of this manual, there are some prerequisites which include:

A. Basic technical hardware and knowledge of:

1. Computers/ Laptop/ Smartphone
2. Internet
3. E-mail account
4. Word processing
5. Spreadsheets (i.e. Excel)
6. Social media account

B. Documents required (in digital form)

1. Firm/ Company/ Co-operative profile
2. Soft copy of the products catalogue, photographs, description and price
3. Trade license/ Certificate of incorporation
4. Tax certificate
5. Proof of Address (copy of utility bill)
6. Bank account details
7. National ID/ Passport

## Objectives

The objective of this manual is to equip women-led Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) with new skills to use digital marketing and e-commerce tools to promote their business. Readers of this manual will be able to understand the practical aspects of digital marketing and e-commerce and conduct online business.

The objective is also to enable the policy makers understand the nuances of doing online business and be able to appreciate the challenges faced by entrepreneurs. This will also help them in making business friendly policies leading to ease of doing business.

# Module 1.

## Basics of e-commerce and digital marketing



## Module 1: Basics of e-commerce and digital marketing

**Aim: Understand and assimilate the need and importance of e-commerce and digital marketing in the present scenario.**

### 1.1 Introduction to e-commerce

#### 1.1.1 What is e-commerce?

E-commerce, or “electronic commerce,” is the buying and selling of products or services on an online platform. It includes the process of browsing through the products or services, gaining information, selecting the product to buy and making the payment using merchant banking or payment gateways. The term e-commerce is not restricted to products and services. It also includes transactions such as the transfer of money, funds, and data. There are six basic types of business classifications that fall under the category of e-commerce.

- **Business - Business (B2B)**

A business transaction that involves two businesses or an agreement between two businesses – such as a wholesaler and a manufacturer. For instance, an automobile equipment company selling its products to a car manufacturer is an example of B2B. This type of transaction does not involve the end customer.

- **Business – Customer (B2C)**

A business transaction between a business owner and the end-user (customer). For example, a vase manufacturing company that directly sells to a homeowner/ home décor enthusiast conducts a B2C. Other examples of B2C are the transactions on platforms such as shopee.com, alibaba.com, ajkerdeal.com, bdbazar.com, flipkart.com, daraz.com, hungrynaki.com, and foodpanda.com.

- **Consumer – Consumer (C2C)**

These are generally online-based transactions involving two different consumers. For example, Gpay or PayTm, where companies and consumers use the platform to make payments. Other examples include Bkash, Nagad, or Rocket, where companies and consumers use the platform for payments. Facebook groups also facilitate C2C business through pages in which individuals buy and sell items electronically.

- **Consumer – Business (C2B)**

This type of transaction involves consumers offering products or services to businesses. C2B relationships can be beneficial when companies work with consumers to build brand awareness. For example, consumers can provide reviews; act as business consultants; offer services, such as photography or graphic design for business logos; work as freelance writers; and become influencers in marketing.

- **Business – Administration (B2A)**

A company provides products and services for public administration. Examples of B2A include firms that provide security services; employment; or software services to the government.



- **Consumer – Administration (C2A)**

This involves a transaction between a consumer and the public administration service provider. For example, tax returns filing falls under the C2A category.

### 1.1.2 How is e-commerce changing world trade?

E-commerce has heralded significant shifts for world trade. The rapid pace of technological advancements in the 21st century have led to a snowballing e-commerce industry that now provides an abundance of opportunities for entrepreneurs worldwide. The process of initiating, ordering, transacting, and buying a product has become easier, faster, and more cost-effective. This mode of business has largely benefitted small-scale industries and businesses. Through e-commerce, small businesses can connect with their target customers more efficiently and promptly. It has opened up prospects for cross-border business deals without the need for travel. International trade can be conducted through a simple electronic transaction. Products can be delivered to far-away customers through digital networks.

Digital tracking ensures the safety of the product, along with guarantees the product will reach the buyer. E-commerce has made it possible for everyone to conduct business via electronic means. By leaving a digital footprint for each transaction, e-commerce empowers research and development, computing, accounting, marketing, inventory management, etc. The online sphere gives businesses a chance to expand more rapidly than ever and with more significant outreach to a wider customer base. Not only does e-commerce facilitate global reach, but it also provides a critical feedback loop between businesses and consumers — through information about the products and services and in the form of reviews and ratings. All these features contribute to the success of e-commerce, making it a convenient type of business mode. Given the substantial benefits to e-commerce engagement, the majority of new businesses now seek to increasingly leverage this technology for greater sales and profits.

#### Some of the most successful e-commerce companies are:

- Alibaba - <https://www.alibaba.com/>
- Amazon- <https://www.amazon.in/>
- Walmart- <https://www.walmart.com/>
- eBay- <https://www.ebay.com/>
- Wayfair <https://www.wayfair.com/>
- JD.com <https://global.jd.com/>
- Rakuten <https://www.rakuten.com/>
- Newegg <https://www.newegg.com/>
- Flipkart <https://www.flipkart.com/>
- Lazada <https://www.lazada.com.my/>
- Zomato Ltd. <https://www.zomato.com/>

### 1.1.3 Benefits and challenges of e-commerce

#### Benefits

The advantages of e-commerce over traditional retail businesses are vast. Online business paves the way for local businesses to flourish on larger scales. Some of the benefits, especially for women entrepreneurs, are listed below.

- Ability to showcase niche products online
- Flexibility of working from home without the need to commute to a workplace
- Less cost and effort involved to set up an e-commerce store than a traditional retail store
- Reduction in overhead costs required for real estate, travel, etc.
- Provides access to millions of target customers across the globe from the comforts of home
- Provides a flexible working schedule
- Avoids business-related meetings and commitments
- Complete digitalization allows easier tracking of products
- Customers can purchase quickly
- Businesses can easily attract new customers
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, e-commerce is a safer and more convenient option

#### Challenges

However, e-commerce also has certain limitations, or challenges, in terms of:

- Security of financial data is the biggest threat for many consumers
- It is common for consumers to fear the lack of data privacy
- Some consumers may prefer to personally touch and feel the product before purchasing
- Person-to-person help with browsing and product recommendations is not commonly available in e-commerce shops
- Too much information from several online resources may create confusion in buyers' minds
- Building trust with consumers may take longer
- Unpredictable technical glitches may withhold business transactions
- Rapid technological advancements demand frequent software updates
- Tests and trials are not possible
- Customer interaction is limited

### 1.1.4 How can women entrepreneurs benefit from e-commerce?

E-commerce opens up a multitude of opportunities for women entrepreneurs to grow and scale up their businesses. One of the most significant advantages of e-commerce lies in its flexibility. Women, who frequently juggle multiple responsibilities, such as childcare, can choose to stay at home and still start and expand a business, working flexible hours. There is immense scope to reach a broader customer base from within the four walls of a home. With the help of digital marketing and search engine optimization, products can effectively appear in searches. It is far more convenient than the traditional need to establish a brick-and-mortar business. Another critical aspect of e-commerce for women is having access to a wider supply chain and the ability to expand the business across geographical destinations. There is no obligation to travel or meet face-to-face to convince a physically distant consumer. This advantage works wonders for women who want to participate economically but have household obligations. Also, the fact that any number of products can be displayed without worrying about rentals and overheads is an additional advantage. Women can showcase their niche businesses with ease and make a mark of their own in the business world at minimal cost.

### 1.1.5 Terminologies in e-commerce

Below is the list of a few commonly used terminologies in e-commerce.

Affiliate	An individual or business promoting the business of another, for a commission.
Affiliate Marketing	The process of promoting a product or business through an affiliate.
Blogs	An informal article written about topics relevant to the specific websites.
Brick-and-mortar	A physical store where consumers can buy products in person.
Browser	A software application for accessing the information on the Internet.
B2B	Business to Business - The process of selling products or services to another business.
B2C	Business to Consumer - The process of selling products or services to the consumer directly.
B2E	Business-to-employee - An intra-business network which allows companies to provide products and/ or services to their employees.
B2G	Business-to-government - Trade between the business sector as a supplier and a government body as a customer.
Call to Action	It is typically a button or a sentence that persuades the consumer to take action from the website.
C2B	Consumer-to-business - A business model in which consumers create value and businesses consume that value.
C2C	Customer to Customer - The process where the customers trade with each other.
Conversion	The number of visitors who turn into buyers.
Conversion Funnel	The process that leads the customer to become a buyer. It starts from the time of initiating the purchase and ultimately converting into a sale.
CMS	Content Management System - A backend system that enables editing of content and pictures in a website.
Cookies	A cookie is a piece of information generated by the website to remember a customer's preferences when using a particular website.
CRM	Customer Relationship Management - The process that helps an organization to analyze their interactions with the customers and implement customer satisfaction strategies.

Digital Commerce	Digital commerce encompasses the entire processes of development, marketing, and servicing through a digital channel as well.
Discount Code	A set of letters alphanumeric or otherwise given as a coupon code or a promo code. The letters can be used/ applied by the customers while making purchases to avail any special offers.
Commission Rate	It is the percentage of commission taken by the banks on the merchant's transactions.
Domain	The name of the website is referred to as a domain.
Email Marketing	The process of conveying information about your products via e-mails.
Engagement Rate	It is a process of assessing how well the visitors are engaging with the content present on the website.
Facebook Insights	The process of gaining information about visitor's engagement on Facebook.
G2B	Government-to-business - A Government agency communicating with or purchasing products or services from a business online.
G2C	Government-to-citizen - The online provision of services and information by the Government to private citizens.
G2E	Government-to-employee - The online interactions through instantaneous communication tools between Government units and their employees.
G2G	Government-to-government - The online non-commercial interaction between government organizations, departments, and authorities with other government organizations, departments, and authorities.
Google Analytics	A free digital analytics software service by Google that allows businesses to analyze details about the quantity of visitors to a website.
Google AdWords	An online platform developed by Google, where advertisers pay to display their advertisements for the promotion of their business.
Landing Page	The home page that opens soon after entering the website address.
Lead	A lead is a business opportunity or enquiry which can convert into getting a final order
Invoice / Bill	A statement of amount for the purchases made, giving details of the product such as quantity, rate, discount and taxes collected etc., and the total amount paid/payable by the customer.
M2C	Manager-to-consumer - The manufacturers provide the product and service for the consumer to reduce the circulation and cost of sales to protect product and service quality. M2C also ensures improved customer relations.
Merchant Account	A type of bank account that accepts payment through debit and credit cards.
Mobile Optimization	The process of adjusting the website content to enable website visitors from mobile devices to customize the view to the size of their mobile devices.
Online Transaction	The process of making payment via online portals.
P2P	Peer-to-peer - A decentralized model whereby two individuals interact to buy/ sell goods and services directly with each other or to produce goods and services together, without an intermediary third-party or the use of an incorporated entity or business firm.
Payment Gateway	The technology used by merchants to accept payments made via debit and credit cards.
PPC	Pay Per Click - The process where the advertiser pays money to the host for every click of their advertisement from the user.
QR Code	It is the Quick Response Code attached to a product. This unique bar code contains information about the product or the user.

Search Engine	An internet search mechanism that is designed to search various websites to gather relevant information as directed by the keywords.
SEO	Search Engine Optimization is a process of improving the quality and quantity of website traffic. SEO is the process of using social media networks to grow an online presence. A search engine is a web-based software which enables users to find information on the Internet. Popular examples of search engines are Google, Yahoo!, and MSN.
SMO	Social Media Optimization - Social media optimization (SMO) is the utilization of social media platforms to manage and grow an organization or business and increase its online presence.
Shopping Cart	The virtual cart to store the selected items for purchase from a website.
Shipping	The process of transporting the products to the buyers.
Website	A set of related web pages under one domain space.
Website Traffic	The number of visitors visiting a website.
Web Server	A web server is a computer that runs websites. The software of the web server distributes web pages as they are requisitioned. The basic objective of the web server is to store, process, and deliver requested webpages to users' screens.

## 1.2 Introduction to Digital Marketing

### 1.2.1 What is digital marketing?

**Digital marketing** is the use of the internet, mobile devices, social media, search engines, and other channels to reach consumers.

The internet has transformed the world in many ways, including the way we sell. It is not just the latest marketing medium; instead, it sets an example for how customers connect with brands and with each other. The complete scope of marketing is practiced on the internet platform – products and services are displayed, promoted, purchased, distributed, and serviced. Business websites provide consumers with more options, more influence and more power at their fingertips than ever before. Companies have new ways of selling new products and services and are entering into previously untapped markets to find prospective buyers.

Digital marketing is the strategy used for marketing using digital channels. It is the best way of growing business and providing product services via digital technology. Any type of marketing can be migrated to the digital sphere – with the only prerequisite being the use of an electronic device with the Internet. Digital channels like social media, e-mail, search engines, and websites can be used to promote any kind of business and to interact with customers.

The roles played by marketing companies have also evolved. Even so-called 'traditional' companies are becoming better at digital marketing. More than ever, integrated plans that speak about an overall brand identity are essential to accomplish an organization's objectives. Consumers are increasingly becoming more fluent in their activity across channels and in their use of various channels at once. They expect the same digital fluency from the brands they frequent. Brands build loyalty among prospective clients dedicated to their products or services. More than any other type of marketing, digital marketing is measurable and traceable. This allows brands to build tailored, optimized brand experiences for clients.

#### Examples of digital marketing assets

- Your website
- Branded assets (logos, icons, acronyms, etc.)

- Video content (video ads, product demos, etc.)
- Images (infographics, product pictures, company photos, etc.)
- Written content (blog posts, eBooks, product descriptions, testimonials, etc.)
- Online products or tools (Sass, calculators, interactive content, etc.)
- Reviews
- Social media pages

### 1.2.2 The Importance of Digital Marketing

Digital media marketing solutions are focused on capturing a fast-growing and profitable online market. Digital marketing enables businesses to acquire customers and establish a position in a rapidly changing commercial sphere. To be effective, a well-defined strategy is crucial. Without digital marketing, many opportunities — such as connecting with distant consumer populations — are lost and profit is unmaterialized. Creating a digital marketing strategy helps entrepreneurs to make informed decisions about how to navigate the arena and ensures that efforts are focused on the elements of digital marketing that are most relevant to the business. Creating a strategy is an important step towards understanding how the fast-moving digital marketplace relates to and can impact the relationship between a business or brand and prospective customers. The group of potential online customers is a much larger group of people than what a business can attract locally. Using digital marketing, businesses can reach an enormous audience in a way that is both cost-effective and measurable.

#### Businesses benefit from digital marketing when entrepreneurs:

- Interact with prospective consumers and learn exactly what they are looking for
- Connect with a global marketplace
- Save money and reach more customers for less money than traditional marketing methods
- Get to know the audience and allow them to know the entrepreneur personally, which can help to create brand loyalty
- Track responses to marketing efforts in real time

It hardly matters what kind of business an entrepreneur is involved in; it's a fairly safe bet to say that increasing the target market depends on the everyday use of digital technology to research, evaluate, and buy products and services. Entrepreneurs should have a consistent strategy for customer engagement and retention through digital platforms in order to avoid missing opportunities or being left behind by competitors. The internet has an outstanding set of tools, techniques, and tactics that enable marketers to reach out and engage with prospective customers on a regular basis. While these tools offer seemingly endless opportunities for marketing, the fast-paced nature of the environment also makes the endeavor more challenging, dynamic, and diverse than ever before.

As digital platforms continue to widen the scope available to the marketers, having a clearly defined strategy is essential for entrepreneurs to stay focused, ensuring that marketing activities are always aligned with business goals, and, importantly, that the right population segments are being targeted for the product being sold.



### 1.2.3 The importance of feedback and ratings in digital marketing

Is customer feedback through online channels important? The answer is, indeed, yes. Customers can share their experiences quickly due to the ease of use of digital platforms. Product reviews are not just present on e-commerce websites, they are available on social media, blogs, and forums, leading to nearly endless channels in which consumers can publicly disseminate information about your product. The majority of travel, e-commerce, and customer-centric websites — such as Amazon, Trip Advisor, and Yelp — are dedicated to customer reviews. All of these websites allow consumers to freely give their comments about products and services, whether they are positive or negative. These websites may even provide customers with rewards as an incentive for providing feedback. Reviews are a precious asset for any company, especially B2Cs, and can be important for a business to ensure their offerings are in tune with customer demands to the greatest extent possible. Understanding what customers want enables entrepreneurs to put their money and efforts in the right place. To make this happen, digital marketing is key. Feedback is an integral part of the decision-making process and an important and effective business tool.

#### Importance of Customer Reviews/Feedback

According to Bright Local (an all-in-one local marketing platform), 97% of customers searched online for local business reviews in 2017. This number already says a lot about the significance of customer reviews and their influence on purchasing decisions. What matters even more is that 85% of consumers believe online reviews as much as suggestions from relatives and friends. Positive or negative reviews can influence sales because consumers frequently look for feedback before making a buying decision. If they find the reviews trustworthy and relevant, they will most likely listen to them. Customers want to relate to the reviewers; they want to know the opinions of people who have tried the product before, even if the people themselves are complete strangers.

#### Customer Feedback

Opinions from customers help entrepreneurs take note of product performance or services, as well as after-sales services. Even negative reviews are constructive for pinpointing what improvements can be made to make products more aligned to what customers expect.

#### Increased Visibility

Overall, customer reviews should indicate that the business is legitimate and trustworthy. If this is the case, the search engine rank will increase simultaneously with positive consumer reviews. When feedback about a product is shared on social media, readers check the brand's website, increasing the brand's awareness and visibility. Feedback on consumer review sites can also influence the number of views of the website. For example, TripAdvisor permits travelers to rate hotels they visit based on a variety of criteria (cleanliness, location, etc.). Guests can also provide comments. If a hotel is highly rated by the majority of guests, it will display higher in the ranking of all hotels in the city, leading TripAdvisor users to be more likely to visit the hotel's website.

#### How to receive and interpret customer reviews?

The initial step to receiving customer reviews is to ask for them! A part of the website should be devoted to customer reviews and feedback. The feedback section should be a place where customers can share what they think about your products and services. Post-sale, customers should be sent e-mails requesting opinions, via a short survey or an open-ended question. One important way to receive a large number of reviews is by providing incentives. For example, the popular fast-food chain Subway provides a free cookie to anyone who answers a one-minute survey about their food and franchise or business.

In addition to empowering your business with essential data, providing rewards will show your consumers that you care about them and their opinions, which in the long run functions to solidify brand loyalty.

### **Use social listening**

On the other side, customers do not always like to give feedback about a product on the brand's owned media — online reviews can be found on multiple platforms. The vast amount of sources makes it infeasible for the senior manager to monitor every review by themselves. That's where social listening comes into the scenario. Social listening platforms accumulate all mentions of a product or brand based on chosen keywords. These platforms can collect consumer reviews from thousands of recognized media, local websites, and other online sources in a centralized location.

Social listening is the process of understanding the online conversation about a company or brand, as well as its products and services. Social listening tools can help companies gather and analyze customer data from a variety of social media and online review platforms in order to use the data to improve marketing, operational and business metrics. After data is collected, social listening platforms examine it to provide a metrics-based review. This will help entrepreneurs to compare the numbers of positive and negative reviews. These reviews will be sorted into groups based on what the feedback is about. Let's take the instance of a company that produces baby products and is monitoring customer reviews. After analyzing the feedback in each review, comments are classified according to their subject: price, quality, effectiveness, etc. The brand can choose these topics based on their business goals. This helps the brand recognize the strengths and weaknesses of their products. You can also monitor your competitor's feedback to interpret their consumer reviews and understand how they are working. Their reviews can help you assess how competitors are faring — and where their strengths and weaknesses are — and revert that feedback to the product team. Thanks to the different gadgets that social listening tools supply, entrepreneurs can monitor and analyze all customer reviews and take proper action.

### **Limitations of customer reviews**

Even if customer feedback is useful, it is not without disadvantages. First, fake reviews are plentiful on website. Unethical business may post positive reviews about themselves using fake accounts to enhance their rankings and visibility. Conversely, competitors may try to strain the reputation of another company by posting negative reviews. Consumers may not be able to discern between fake and genuine reviews and can be easily led to believe false information or messages. This is another significant reason for social listening — by monitoring your mentions and managing your online reputation; you can quickly identify suspicious posts and act. You can also reach your competitor's reviews via social listening to see if some of them seem deceitful.

Surveys may not always reveal the consumer's genuine opinion. This can happen when the consumer does not directly decide to post a review and instead requests to complete a survey. Conducting surveys often brings partial or limited opinions about your products, brands, or services. With this type of data collection, the buyer doesn't have as much incentive to give truthful feedback. Customers frequently end up saying what the company wants to hear, and not what they think. Other consumers may fill the survey arbitrarily just to complete it, specifically if there is a reward. You must take this into account when analyzing customer feedback and not depend solely on survey data. The more different and numerous your sources are, the more exact the data will be [1].

### 1.2.4 Search engine optimization and marketing

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the strategic use of a web-based software that enables users to find information on the internet. Popular examples of search engines are Google, Yahoo!, and MSN. As an e-commerce entrepreneur, SEO can benefit your business by ensuring that your website receives traffic from the free (or “organic”) search results that search engines provide to users. Search engine optimization is crucial as search engines are used to rank websites. If a business wants to be found through search engines, SEO is necessary. Google is the leading search engine and getting ranked by Google is mandatory for almost all businesses.



#### Relevance, usefulness and importance

SEO ensures that your website is following certain best practices, so that Google and other search engines can see and rank the website. SEO creates or improves the website so that search engines identify it as being compatible, useful, and important in reference to the question asked by a searcher.

Ideally, when a search engine finds that the site is legitimate, helpful, and relevant for a search query, it ranks the website higher in the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs). However, SEO is not a “one and done” process. It can be a comparatively slow process at the outset and needs consistent effort to maintain it. Search engines are constantly evolving, and your SEO strategy should be able to constantly adapt. The power of a good SEO campaign is matchless, but it is a very competitive and fast-paced environment that will require consistent effort from the entrepreneur.

It is important to note that successful rankings and traffic from a SEO does not happen overnight. You will need to work robustly on your site to make sure that everything is working correctly and being seen by search engines. Also, you should know that SEO isn’t really about being ranked number one for a particular keyword. The best SEO strategies target various keywords and focus on accumulating more responsive visitors and a higher quantity of and traffic. Think about it: you may have 1,000 visitors with only 10 converting into customers or 800 visitors with 15 converting into customers. Don’t get stuck on rankings, specific keywords, and total traffic numbers or you may lose sight of the overall results that can come from your SEO strategies.

Suppose we want to market an event, SEO is all of the planning that goes in ahead of time to make sure that the event runs smoothly and that people are aware that the event is happening so that they can attend. You would also need to follow applicable target dates and guidelines to ensure that local newspapers, magazines, and event listings publish information about your event in their event calendars so that people who might be interested will hear about it.

## Initiate with a strategy

Developing an SEO strategy is like planning an event. The more thought you put into the target attendees and how to attract them, the more prosperous you will be.

Your SEO strategy should begin with these queries:

1. Who is your ideal or prospective customer?
2. Where are they situated?
3. Which online platform do they spend the most of their time on?
4. Which keywords might they use to search for a company like yours?
5. What is the likely intention behind their search query?

## Use related titles and meta descriptions

Your webpage titles and meta descriptions are essential because they display in the search engine results. A page's title is the heading that displays in the search results, and it is also the name that appears on the tab or window of the web browser. A meta description, on the other hand, is the information that displays below the title in the search results. These two short pieces of information are typically the first impression that your website makes on a visitor, so make them count.

### Example:

Page: WebDreams Homepage (<http://www.webdreams.in/>)

Title: Web Design Company in Hubli | Website Development in Bangalore

Meta Description: WebDreams is a leading web Design Company in Hubli, Belgaum offers SEO, SMO, e-commerce solutions, hosting, website designing, and development services in Bangalore, Belgaum.

**Figure 1. Search engine results for WebDreams, as they appear to viewers.**

### Google Result:



Source: [https://www.google.com/search?q=web+design+company+in+hubli&rlz=1C1CHBD\\_enIN881IN881&oq=web+design+company+in+hubli+&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l4j69i60l2.8847j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=web+design+company+in+hubli&rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN881IN881&oq=web+design+company+in+hubli+&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l4j69i60l2.8847j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)

### Bing Result:



You should also be aware that search engines may show alternate text from your page if they don't feel that your meta description is compatible with the searcher's query.

### **Submit the latest sitemap**

A sitemap, or list of all the pages of your website, is also necessary. An HTML sitemap is typically accessed through a link in the footer or header of your website, and aids visitors find a specific page that may or may not be accessible through other menus. The XML sitemap, on the other hand, will facilitate Google and other search engines to crawl and index your website. By sending an XML sitemap, search engines will discover and index all of the web pages on your site more easily. When search engines crawl and index new and updated pages on your website and blog, your organic search rankings will tend to increase.

### **Include relevant content on your pages**

Having relevant content on your web pages will allow your site to be pertinent to searchers' queries. On-page content needs to be written and presented so visitors can find answers to the questions they have. Search engines are available to help people find what they are looking for on the internet. You must confirm that the information on your site's pages is relevant to the questions your prospective customers are likely to ask. Do not write for search engine bots. If your content is not helpful to real searchers, they are unlikely to stay on your website and become your loyal customers.

### **Target keywords that are related to your business**

The on-page content should include the words and phrases or sentences that you want to rank for. If you want people to find your website when they are searching for instance "Blue Widgets", then it is better to include the words "Blue Widgets" on your site.

You should know that while ranking for common keywords can be a great goal, it may not be practical due to competition levels and different searcher intentions. Going after less competitive "long-tail keywords" can be more productive and result in better-qualified traffic coming to your site. For instance, rather than targeting just the phrase "Blue Widgets," you may target a phrase like "Blue Widgets for sale in Your Town, USA."

### **Work to get links from the high-ranking websites**

Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin wanted to find the best way to arrange the seemingly infinite amount of data present on the internet so that people could easily find what they were searching for. In the initial days of Google, they examined the links between websites as voters approved the websites. This innovative idea would eventually become the base of the latest search engines.

Over two decades, this idea has been refined and become more elaborate and difficult. Now, instead of simply counting the number of links leading to a particular website, search engines also look at the quality of websites from which those links originate. If the links look "spam" or are not pertinent to the website they link to, the links will be discounted, and the website would be possibly penalized for low-quality backlinks. Backlinks from a .gov or .edu domain require identity verification and so tend to be more trusted than those coming from more typical domain types such as .com. Despite this, .com sites which are well-founded and trusted by the search engines also have more weight when it comes to their backlinks.

**Figure 2. Backlinks in relation to website ranking**



Source: <https://idealnewstech.com/value-of-high-quality-backlinks/>

Higher numbers of links can increase the digital prominence of a website. The same results can be achieved by a small number of links from trusted and well-established websites. To make a social analogy, being linked to high ranking and reliable websites is like bringing a popular friend with you to a party; you become cool by association, and the host's approximation of your popularity improves.

### 1.2.5 Search Engine Marketing

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is an umbrella term used to explain an alternate method of online advertising. Like SEO, SEM used to attract relevant users to a website. The general perception of SEM is the ads that are displayed at the top and to the right of search engine results on search engines like Google and Bing. However, the term can also be used to refer to paid advertising on social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Google+, and Pinterest), or ads posted on other websites, apps, or parts of the digital world.

**Figure 3. Search engine marketing and its e-commerce components**



Source: <https://www.oberlo.com/ecommerce-wiki/search-engine-marketing-sem>



This type of online marketing is called a Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertisement because each time a user clicks on the ad, there is a payout. However, there are also options in which advertisers are paid per thousand impressions on various online ad platforms.

Whether you refer to paid online advertising as SEM or PPC, there are some important elements you should know before you get started.

### 1.2.6 Differences between SEO & SEM

There are a number of important differences between SEO and SEM that any e-commerce entrepreneur should know about before embarking on SEO and SEM campaigns.

**Figure 4. Chart contrasting Search Engine Optimization and Search Engine Marketing**

Difference between SEO and SEM	
SEO	SEM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes time to show results</li> <li>• Brings long term benefit</li> <li>• Cannot target specific audience</li> <li>• Use of keywords is critical</li> <li>• Organic results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results are immediate</li> <li>• Brings short term benefits</li> <li>• Can target specific audience</li> <li>• Content is critical</li> <li>• Paid results</li> </ul>

As discussed earlier in the manual, SEO is implemented to have your website to rank in the regular search engine results – or the ‘organic’ search results in the digital marketing field. In contrast, SEM involves paying to place your ads with your website information in a particular place, including above or next to search engine results. Both organic and the paid versions of search results are highly competitive, but they offer unique benefits.

For instance, effective SEO strategies require a longer time frame before producing results – between 6 and 12 months, or even more depending on competition levels. You also need to continue to optimize and refresh your online presence to preserve rankings. With SEM, on the other hand, listings are placed almost instantly, but maintaining that placement needs continuous upgrading and an ongoing cash infusion.

We can think about the difference between SEO and SEM like losing weight through diet and exercise versus having surgery. SEO is like reducing weight through diet and regular exercise – it takes time to be effective, needs constant attention to details, and demands constant work to maintain the results even once the desired results have been achieved. Meanwhile, SEM is more like undergoing surgery – liposuction immediately takes the pounds off. The results are quick and sizable but still require money and constant upkeep and maintenance.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.2.7 Important components of SEM

SEM is a simple idea that consists of complex implementation. When you work on SEM, as in traditional advertising, you work on campaigns. A campaign is a series of advertisements that share a common topic and are designed to work together. In SEM, you create the ad campaigns to target particular and relevant keywords. The most effective campaigns are cohesive; they connect everything – keywords, your advertisement groups, etc. together so

<sup>2</sup> Netmark (2016). The 6 Fundamentals of Digital Marketing. Available at [http://www.accioneduca.org/admin/archivos/clases/material/principles-of-digital-marketing\\_1564149656.pdf](http://www.accioneduca.org/admin/archivos/clases/material/principles-of-digital-marketing_1564149656.pdf)

that the advertisements do not create conflicting messages. Another way to make ads as successful as possible is to ensure they are placed on relevant websites and partner networks of search engines. Going back to the event analogy, placing an advertisement for a tennis tournament in a sports shop is likely to give better results than placing them inside a sewing machine store.

When you are working with paid search platforms like Google AdWords or Bing Ads, your ad position refers to where your ad falls among the ads placed around particular search results. In a traditional advertising bid, the people who wish to pay the most receive optimal placement. That's not necessarily true in ad placement bidding for multiple search engines. Google Ad Rank and other search engines ranking resolution consist of a combination of various factors. Remember, search engines are trying to provide the most relevant information for the user, so that the users will return and use their services again. That's why most search engines use customized algorithms to find ad placement based on different factors like bid and relevance. And on many Pay-Per-Click ad platforms, including Google AdWords, you only pay when visitors click on your ad [2].

Let's study how Google Ad Rank explains how the ad position is found. Hal Varian, Google's Chief Economist, says that they utilize the variation of what is called a second price auction for ad placement. In the second price advertising auction, the advertiser does not have to pay the full bid; they just have to pay enough to beat the next highest bidder below them.

**Figure 5. Hypothetical second-price ad auction for ad placement on Google Ads**



Source: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.157.9817&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Varian gives an example in which Bidder #1 bids \$4, Bidder #2 bids \$3, Bidder #3 bids \$2, and Bidder #4 bids \$1. In a traditional auction, each bidder will pay what they bid and be placed in the descending order. In a regular second-price auction, on the other hand, their placement is still descending, but bidder #1 pays \$3, Bidder #2 pays \$2, Bidder #3 pays \$1, and so on. In short, you bid what you are willing to pay as the maximum amount, but you pay just enough to defeat your competition. In this type of auction, the buyer often pays less money than their full bid.<sup>3</sup> Your ad placement through Google AdWords takes into consideration more than your maximum bid because they want to display highly relevant ads to their users. Therefore, your ad position is determined with the help of the Ad Rank algorithm.

3 Levin, Jonathan (2009). Sponsored Search Auctions. Stanford University. Available at <https://web.stanford.edu/~jdlevin/Econ%20285/Sponsored%20Search%20Auctions.pdf>



The three main elements of an Ad Rank are:

1. Your maximum bidding.
2. Your Quality Score — expected click-through rates (CTR), the relevancy of your ad to the searcher's query, and the quality and pertinence of your landing page.
3. The expected impact of the Ad Formats — including cell numbers, website links, and the presence of your website's domain in the ad headline.

**Figure 6. The three components of an ad rank by Google Ads**



Source: [shorturl.at/plWY2](https://shorturl.at/plWY2)

If your Ad Rank isn't high, then your ad may not display up at all because Google feels that it isn't pertinent to the searcher's query. Using information from Google's Ad Rank support pages and videos, we've put together the image below to help make it easy to understand.

### Cost Per Click

**Figure 7. Price and rank of Cost Per Click (CPC) bids, according to quality and format**

	Bid	Quality	Format Impact	= Ad Rank	Cost
	\$2	HIGH	HIGH	20	\$2
	\$3	HIGH	LOW	18	\$2.68
	\$1	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	8	\$1
	\$4	LOW	NO FORMATS	5	\$4

Source: <https://www.ebizroi.com/how-google-ranks-ads/>

As you can see, your ad position is not just what you are willing to spend. Bidder #3 has a lower Cost Per Click (CPC) for an initial position ad placement than Bidder #2, who has the second position because their Ad Rank is high due to a high estimated format impact. If Bidder #2 wants to take first position, they can improve the quality of the ad or change their ad formatting — improving the quality side of their Ad Rank — or they can increase their maximum bid, which will also increase their CPC. Interestingly, Ad Rank is calculated individually for every search query, your ad may be eligible to find out if and where the ad will be placed. While the system may appear tricky to navigate initially, there are sound marketing reasons behind these ranking algorithms.

### **1.2.8 Social Media Optimization and Marketing**

Social media optimization (SMO) is the use of social media platforms to manage and grow an organization or business and increase its online presence. As a digital marketing strategy, social media optimization can be used to enhance the awareness of new products and services, build a relationship with customers, and mitigate the negative business impact of potentially damaging news. Multiple social media platforms — such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and Pinterest — can be used for digital marketing. For years, search engine optimization was optimal for digital marketing efforts, but today SMO is just as important. While SMO and SEO have similar goals —to generate website traffic and enhance awareness for the company's website — SEO focuses solely on increasing the quality and quantity of website traffic by improving the visibility of a website or a webpage to users of a web search engine, such as Google.

Social media marketing at times outranks SEO in popularity, and sometimes replaces it as the most optimal way to strengthen a brand, organize lead generation, enhance a company's visibility on online platforms, and connect to an audience. This is because SMO, which targets social media users based on their interests, directs users to your company's website, where more information on products or services is provided. For instance, a campaign to boost awareness about a new automobile on social media may direct the visitor to a company webpage that gives information about where local dealerships are located and how to schedule the test drive, etc. SMO can therefore move the user from mere interest (demonstrated through browsing online) to practical follow-through in purchases.

Companies using various social media platforms may utilize internet-based tools designed to grow their organization and deliver superior content. These tools help an employee with developing social media content scheduled for publication across many platforms simultaneously. Companies also have to respond to user engagement with posts, including comments or messages. Some famous social media management tools are Loomly, Agora Pulse, Promo Republic, Hootsuite, Buffer, and Sprout Social.

Sharing tools on social media platforms allow users to share content on the internet quickly. Because of this, many companies try to create content that users will share with their friends and connections. This strategy, called viral marketing, tries to achieve a broader reach by getting engaged social media users to share content instead of relying on users to find the content on their own.

### **Social Media Platforms**

The six Social Media platforms that entrepreneurs most frequently use are Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter and YouTube. Each of these platforms offers different strengths and abilities that businesses can maximize to their advantage. For instance, Twitter can be the best way to directly communicate with current and potential clients who have

queries, but Pinterest (which is photo-based) is better for sharing information about goods or services that will lead them to visual advertising. Using some or all of the major social media platforms is the best idea, but you might want to think if there is any benefit to using social media platforms that are less important.

For example, websites like Periscope, Snapchat, Instagram, Tumblr, StumbleUpon, CafeMom, DeviantArt, and Flickr all have followers but aren't as broad in their reach as many mainstream platforms. In Social Media Marketing (SMM), sometimes it is okay to think innovatively and look for a niche population to target. Concentrating on building a social media presence with engaged and targeted customers can work great. However, it's important not to use more social platforms than you can reasonably keep updated and engaging.

Messages or information on various social media platforms can be tailored so that they can have a stronger influence on particular groups of individuals. Marketing professionals using social media can customize their content based on demographic area age, gender, interests, and geographic profiles. For example, if we are selling a shaving cream, then showing the advertisement only to males makes sense.

## **Social Media Marketing**

Social Media Marketing (SMM) is the use of social media platforms and websites to promote a product or service. It is driven by a clear objective. Social Media Marketing strategists will aid you in setting and initiate clear campaign objectives that lead to better results in a less amount of time, and following a few best practices will improve your social media presence.

### **The best social media marketing practices**

#### **Create a great resource:**

1. Complete your profile for your chosen platforms and make sure that they are enabled for public access.
2. Provide helpful, relevant information to those who will follow your profile.
3. Post regularly and use the latest photos and content.

#### **Prepare your website for social sharing:**

1. Make it as simple as you can for others to share the content on your website.
2. Embed social sharing buttons on all the webpages of your website and blog.
3. Suggest to those accessing website content that they may want to share it with others.

#### **Engage with your audience:**

1. Publish exclusive content and run exclusive promotions on various social sites so that those who follow you on more than one platform don't see the same posts in multiple places.
2. Don't just talk about the company – maintain approximately 80% lifestyle/ industry content and around 20% company content in your postings.
3. Don't spam customers – spread out your posts evenly to increase visibility.

### Listen carefully:

1. Respond instantly to questions, comments, and concerns within a short time frame — not hours or days.
2. Have someone available 24 hours per day to address customer needs.
3. Always be polite, courteous, and professional in your interactions with the customers.

### 1.2.9 Basic Knowledge of Digital Tools

- Remove the background (BG) of photos: You can remove the background of any photo using Remove.bg for free. It works by separating the background and foreground layers automatically. Simply select your photo, and the background will be immediately removed.
- Unsplash/ Burst/ Pexels: You can find great photos and videos that can be downloaded and used for free on stock photo and video websites and apps for designers, bloggers, and anyone else in search of visuals. If you like a photo or video, you can download it for free (no strings attached). Using this site's image, the size and resolution of the picture is high (at least 5MP) which is best for design.
- URL Shortener: A method of cutting uniform resource locators (URLs), shorteners direct users to the specified page while using a substantially shorter URL. Domain names for redirects are often shorter than those for the original. As opposed to the long URL, it looks more professional.
- Canva: This is a graphic design platform that is used to create graphics for social media, presentations, posters, documents, and other visual content. Templates are available for users to use in the app. Canva is free to use, however you can subscribe for advanced features such as Canva Pro. Additionally, there are many free templates available to design anything, such as social media posts, banners, posters, videos, memes, etc. It is an open-source design platform. Canva is free to use and open to everyone. No experience or skills are necessary. With Canva, you don't need any previous design experience. Multiple templates and fonts make it easy to use. You can download templates at [www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com).
- Buffer: With Buffer, you can post the same image — with different captions, as you see fit — to several social media platforms. Why not throw in a comment about following you on Facebook in your Instagram post? With this strategy, you can make sure that you're as visible to your customers as possible. In addition, you can schedule your posts, which makes your busy life easier.
- Content Drips: From this site, you can make videos, carousel posts, and edit photos. You can also look at their site for more information about how to make a beautiful and smart carousel. Content Drips can also achieve the following:
  - ♦ Allows you to create carousels in your browser, and carousels often receive more engagement from users than photos and videos
  - ♦ Offers one-point editing and smart cloning, which can save time and effort
  - ♦ The option to turn your blogs, twitter threads or any text content into a carousel post for IG and LinkedIn
- Wordtune: This cool word-tune alternative has an awesome Chrome extension that lets you set the tone, autocomplete, and use other features to **shorten words** and expand sentences. Text suggestions are provided by this AI-powered tool.

### 1.2.10 Pay Per Click (PPC) Campaigns

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) is an online advertising model in which advertisers have to pay every time a user clicks on one of their online ads. There are many types of PPC ads, but one of the most general types is the paid search ad. These ads appear when people search for things on online platforms using a search engine like Google – especially when they are performing commercial searches, meaning that they are looking for something to buy online. This could be anything from the mobile search (someone looking for “pizza near me” on their phone) to a local service search (someone looking for a dentist or a plumber in their area) to someone shopping for a gift (“Mother’s Day flowers”) or a high-end item like enterprise software. All these searches will trigger pay-per-click ads. In a pay-per-click advertisement, businesses running ads are only charged when the user or prospect customers actually clicks on the ad, hence the name “pay- per-click.” Another part of PPC advertising consists of display advertising (typically, serving banner ads) and remarketing. For ads to display alongside the results on a search engine (commonly referred to as a search engine results page, or SERP), advertisers cannot simply pay more to guarantee that their ads appear more frequently than their competitor’s ads. Rather, ads are subject to ad-auctions; it is a completely automated process that Google and other major search engines use to find the pertinence and validity of advertisements that appear on the search engine results page.

An ad-auction is a bidding system. This means that advertisers must bid on the terms that they want to trigger, or display, their ads. These terms are known as keywords. Say for instance, that your business specializes in camping equipment. If users want to purchase a new tent, sleeping bag, or a portable stove, they might enter the keyword “camping equipment” into a search engine to find retailers that are offering these items.

**Figure 8. How pay-per-click ads are triggered through an automated bidding system**



Source: <https://www.floortrendsmag.com/articles/104331-how-to-use-pay-per-click-ads-to-grow-your-business>

Users submit their search queries in search engines, which then perform the difficult algorithmic calculations that the ad-auction is based upon. This will determine which ads are displayed, in which order, and by which advertiser.

Since you have to pay for every click made on your ads by users, you should make it mandatory to only bid on keywords relevant to your business. This will make it more likely that that you will attract business from ad spending that supplements your Return on Investment. A keyword tool will help you to find the right keywords to bid on that particular keyword that are both likely to drive sales or conversions and are not prohibitively expensive [4].

### 1.2.11 Google AdWords

Google AdWords can be used to display your company profile on top of the search results — above the profiles of your competitors — which can give you a cutting edge in securing markets. The details about how this works can be found in the Google AdWords guide, which you can access at <https://www.leadsquared.com/google-adwords-tutorial/> [5].

### 1.2.12 Google Analytics

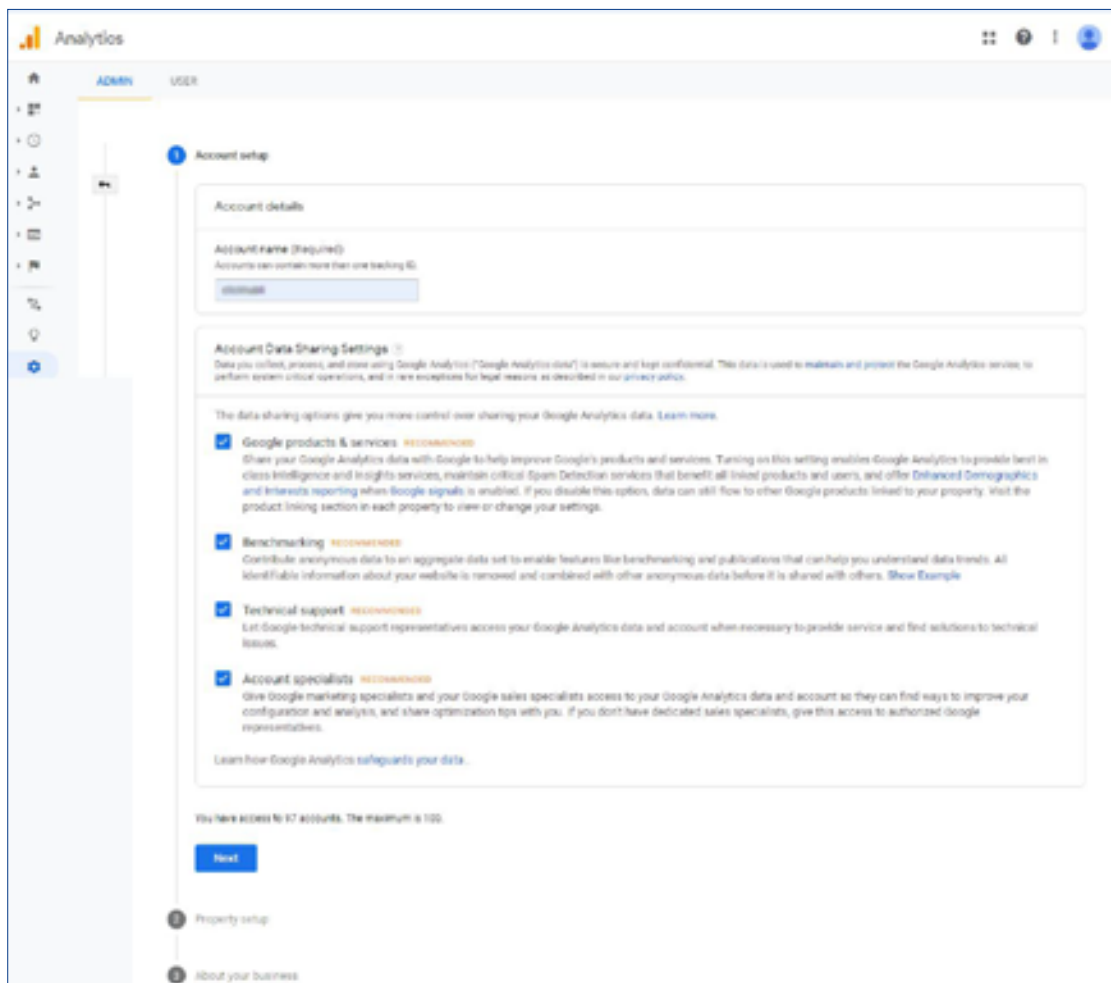
Google Analytics is a tool that will help you to keep track of user activity on your site. This includes: how many users visited your website in a specific time span, where the users are located, which pages they visited, and so on. The data has even expanded to provide feedback on the performance of the website in terms of speed and social signals garnered. To put it simply, Google Analytics is all about providing you with real-time data on your website. It is concrete data that you can translate into useful business intelligence and integrate into your SEO strategy for online campaigns.

#### How to create a Google Analytics account

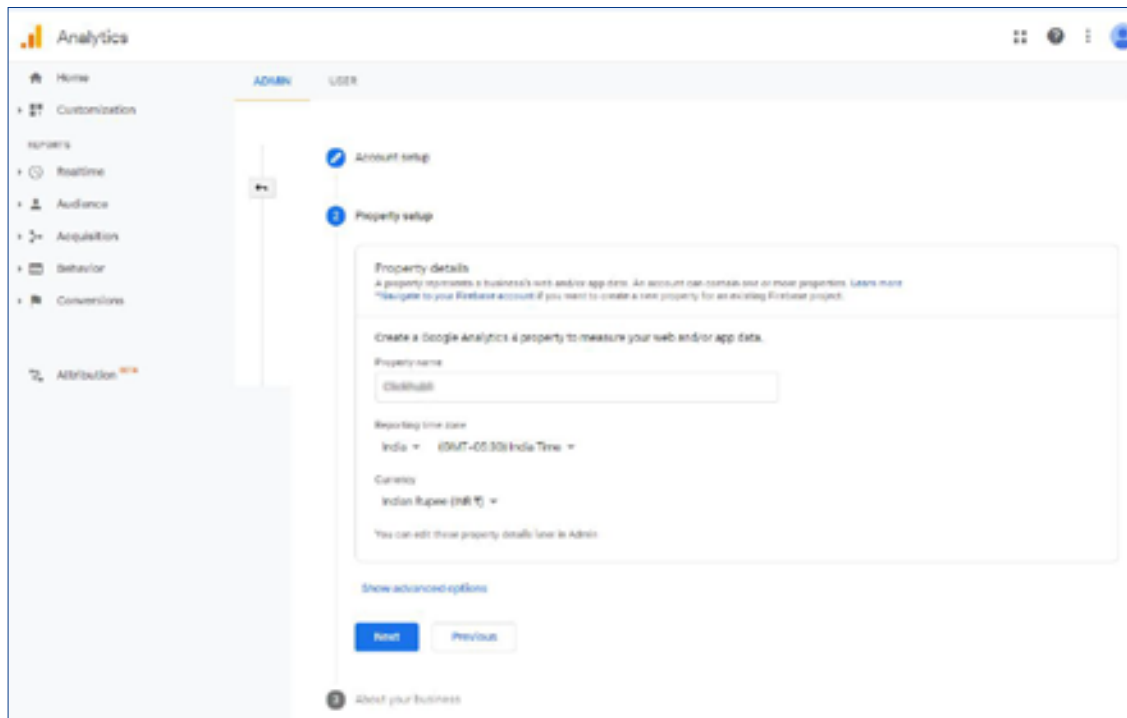
Go to <https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web/provision/#/provision> and create an account. If you already have a Gmail account, you can use that.

To initiate using Google Analytics, and track your website's data, follow the steps given below. Screenshots of an example of the process are provided.

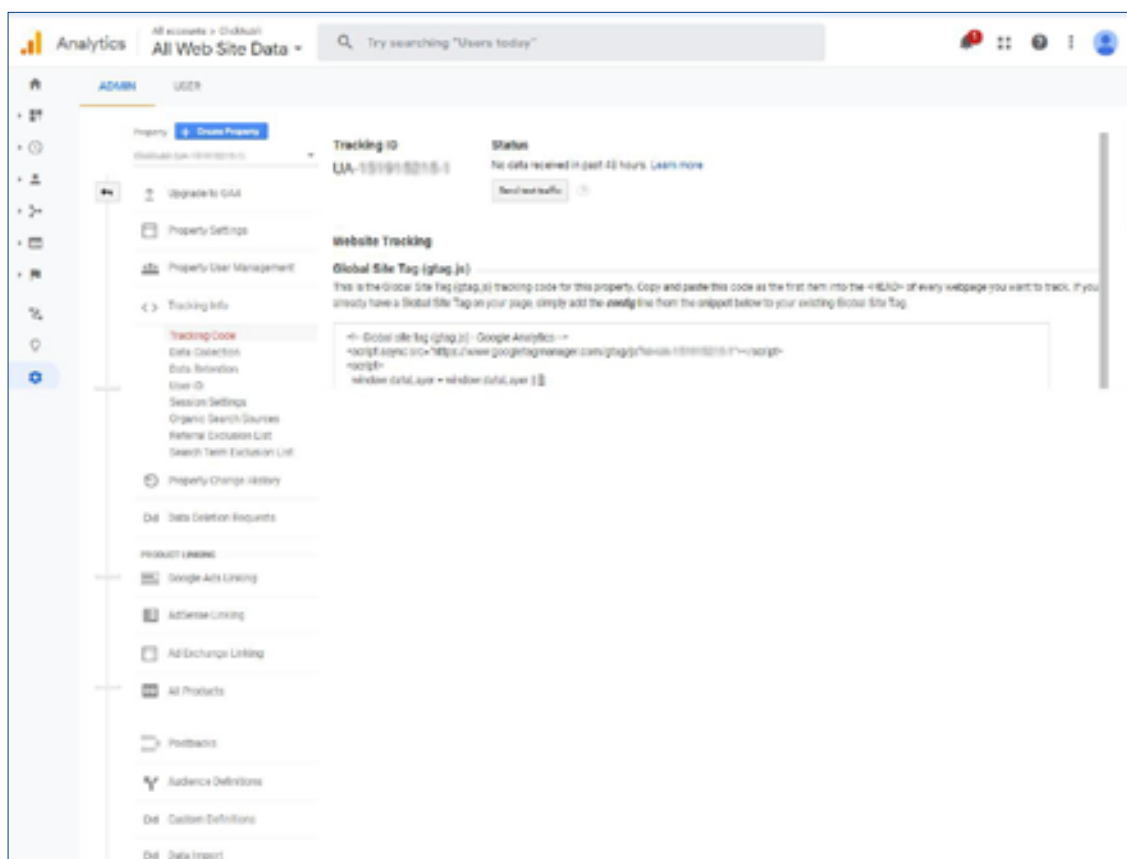
- 1) Click on the New Account. This is where you enter your website.



The screenshot shows the Google Analytics 'Account setup' page. The page is divided into two main sections: 'Account details' and 'Account Data Sharing Settings'. In the 'Account details' section, there is a field for 'Account name (Required)' with a placeholder text 'Account name (Required)' and a note 'Accounts can contain more than one tracking ID.' Below this is a 'Continue' button. The 'Account Data Sharing Settings' section contains a list of four data sharing options, each with a checkbox and a 'RECOMMENDED' label. The first option is 'Google products & services', the second is 'Benchmarking', the third is 'Technical support', and the fourth is 'Account specialists'. Each option has a brief description of what it entails. At the bottom of the page, there is a 'Next' button and a note 'You have access to 17 accounts. The maximum is 100.'



2) Select the Tracking Options. This is pretty simple. Here, we're tracking the website.



3) Receive the tracking code by copying it. It will look like this:

```
<!-- Global site tag (gtag.js) - Google Analytics -->
<script async src='https://www.googletagmanager.com/gtag/js?id=UA-133918215-1'></script>
<script>
  window.dataLayer = window.dataLayer || [];
```



As per the instructions, copy and paste the code into the code of all the webpages you want to track. The web developer generally pastes it into the header code of the theme they use for the Content Management System so that it will automatically be inside the <head> section of every (front-end) webpage of the website.

Then you can manage and use the Google Analytics dashboard to glean data about visitors.

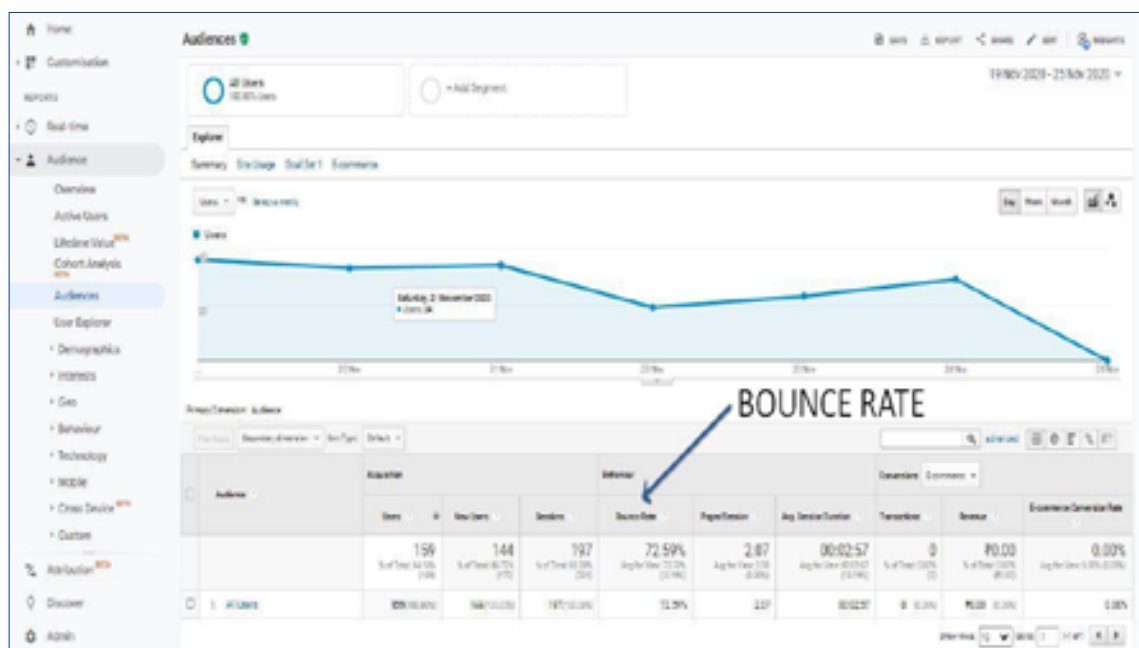
### Understanding the data thoroughly:

After installing the tracking code properly, you will be able to gather user data. The data is displayed whenever you visit your Google Analytics account.

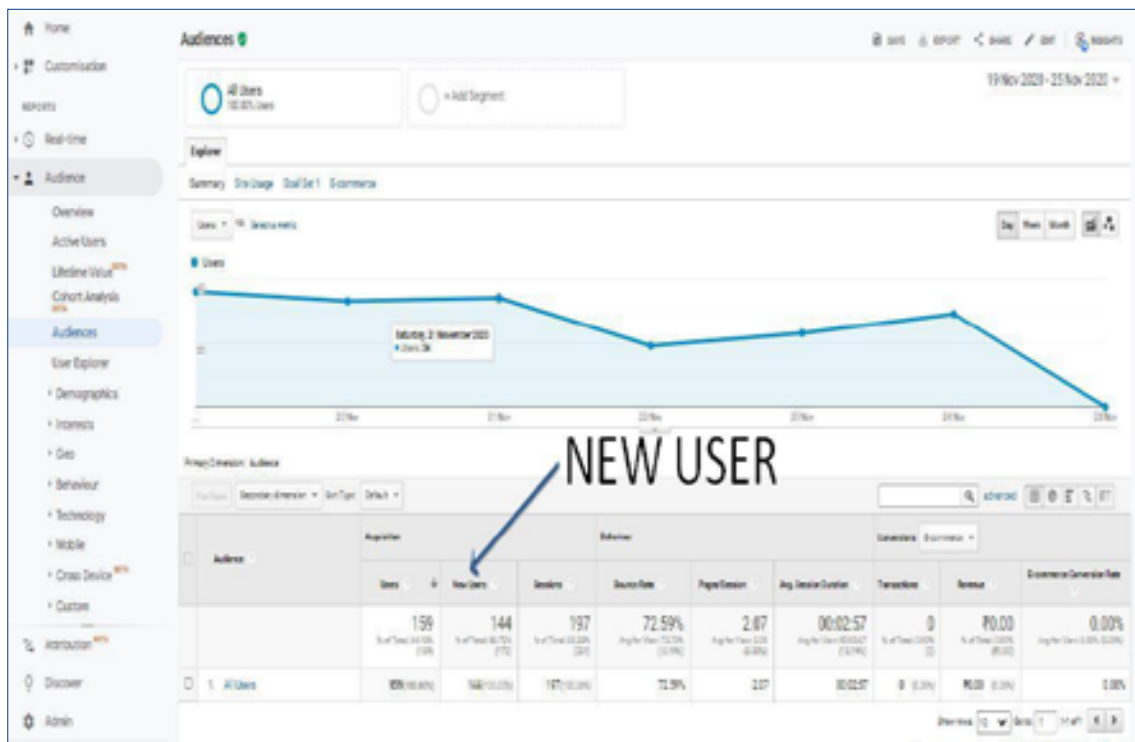


Here are some key definitions of the terms used by Google Analytics:

1. **Bounce Rate** is the percentage of the users going into your website and then 'bouncing out'. Bouncing out can be explained as any action the user does that takes him out of your website within a particular time frame. This time frame is not yet exactly known – it can be a five-minute time frame or a 30-seconds time frame, but it probably depends on the type of website that you have (blog, e-commerce, informational, etc.). For example, if the user hits the 'back' button or the 'X' button after 10 seconds because they do not find what they are searching for, it is considered a 'bounce'.



2. **Percentage (%) of new visits** is simply the percentage of people who have visited your website for the first time during a chosen particular period, versus the number of people who have already visited your website and are re-visiting.



The above contents are only the basics. For a detailed tutorial, visit <https://seo-hacker.com/google-analytics-tutorial>. [6]

### 1.2.13 Webmaster Tools

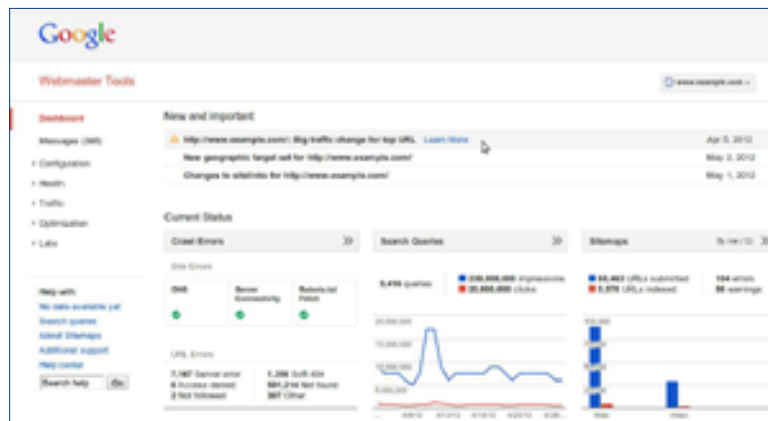
Google Webmaster Tools (GWT) is the basic mechanism for Google to communicate with webmasters. Google Webmaster Tools will help you to identify issues with your website and can even let you know if your site has been infected with malware. GWT is free of cost. The guide to Google Webmaster Tools will help you to understand various characteristics of this tool and provide insight into actionable data. For a more in-depth explanation, visit Google's Webmaster Help at <https://support.google.com/webmasters/?hl=en#topic=9128571>.

### Google Webmaster Tools (GWT) Verification Process

Before you can access any data about your website, you will have to prove that you are an authorized representative of the specific website. This will be done through a process of verification.

There are five important verification methods in place for GWT. There is no real preference as to which method you utilize, although the first two tend to be the most generally used as they have been around for longer.

**Figure 9. A sample page from Google Webmaster Tools shows crawl errors, search queries, and other data.**



Source: <https://webmasters.googleblog.com/2012/05/navigation-dashboard-and-home-page.html>

## HTML file upload

Initially, Google will provide you with the blank, specifically named file that you just have to drop into the root directory of your website. Once this is completed, you just need to click on the 'Verify' button, and you will have access to your GWT data for the website.

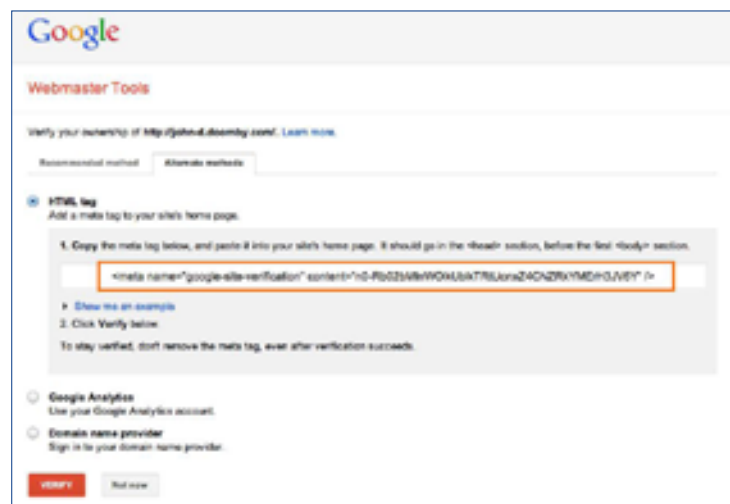
## HTML Tag

Clicking on this option will provide you with a metatag that you can insert into the head section of your home page. Once the metatag is visible, click on "Verify" to view your GWT data. It's important to note that while using this method of verification, the tag can be accidentally removed during an update to the home page, which will lead to the revocation of the verification, but reinserting the tag and clicking on "Verify" again will fix that problem.

## Domain Name Provider

Select your Domain Name Provider from the drop-down list, and Google will give you a detailed guide for verification, along with a unique security token for you to use. If the Google account that you are using for GWT is the same as for Google Analytics and you are using the asynchronous tracking code (with the code in the header of your home page), then you can verify your website this way.

**Figure 10. A screenshot of the Google Webmaster Tools process for website validation**

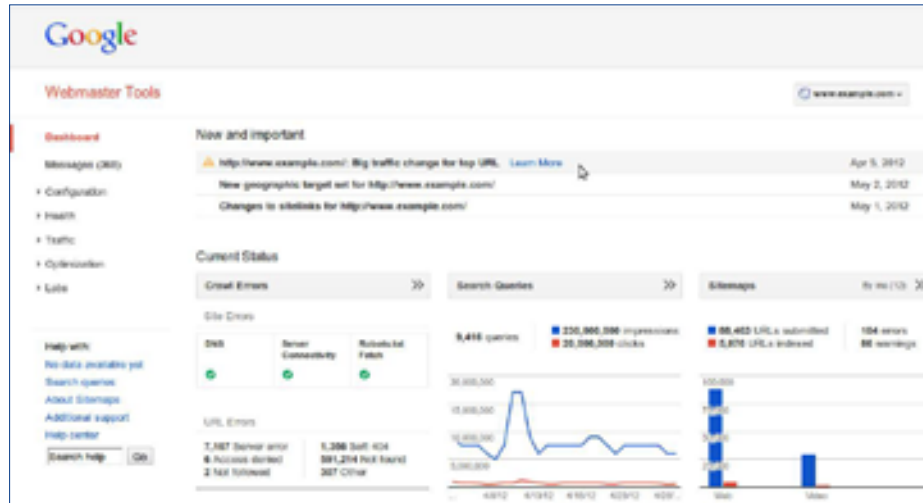


Source: <https://www.emyspot.com/pages/webmaster-tutorials/third-party-services/validate-your-website-with-google-webmaster-tools.html>

## The Dashboard

Now that you have verified your website address, you can login and begin evaluating the data for your website.

**Figure 11. A screenshot of the Google Webmaster Tools Navigation Dashboard**

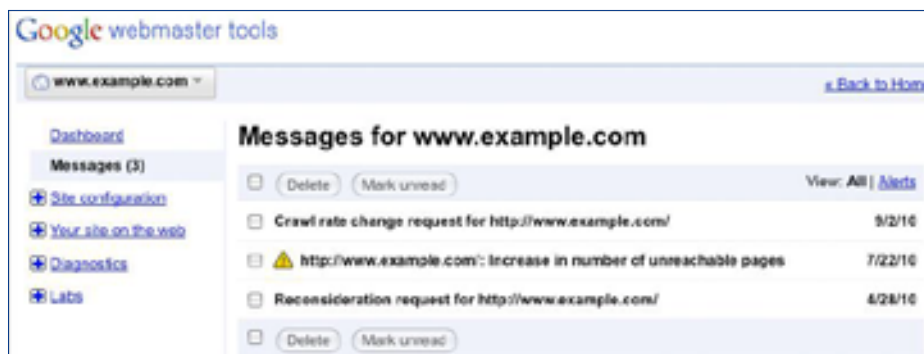


Source: <https://webmasters.googleblog.com/2012/05/navigation-dashboard-and-home-page.html>

The first screen you see is the dashboard. This gives you an instant view of overall data on your website, along with any new messages from Google. We will cover each of the widgets shown here in their sections.

## Site Messages

**Figure 12. A screenshot of Google Webmaster Tools Site messages**

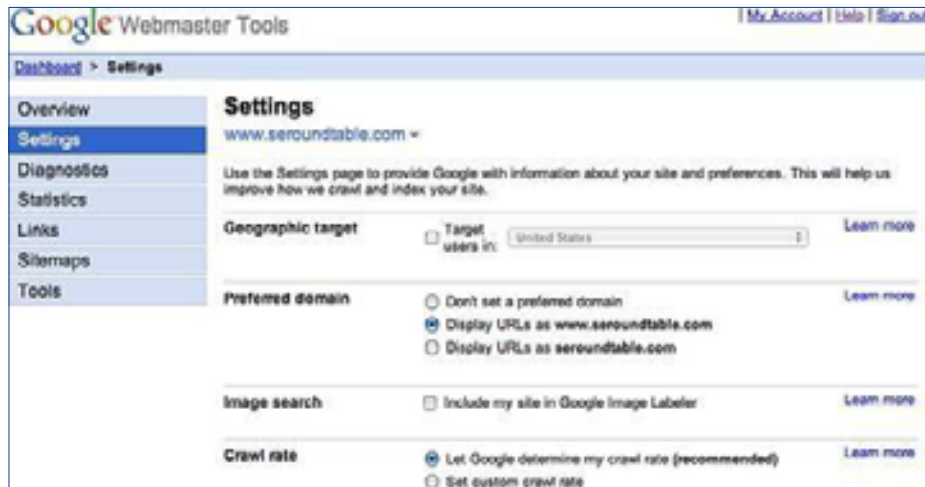


Source: <https://webmasters.googleblog.com/2010/09/new-ways-to-view-webmaster-tools.html>

When the Google search engine wants to communicate with a webmaster, this is the place where they will do so. There may be the messages that will inform you that you have pages infected with malware that they've identified in a large number of pages on your website, which may be an indication of other problems, or even just an informational message that your WordPress installation needs to be updated to eliminate the possibility of anyone exploiting already-known security holes in that specific platform. Not all the messages are bad. There's also the possibility that you will receive a message congratulating you on an increase in the traffic to one or more of your webpages.

## Settings

**Figure 13. A screenshot of settings and configuration on Google Webmaster Tools**



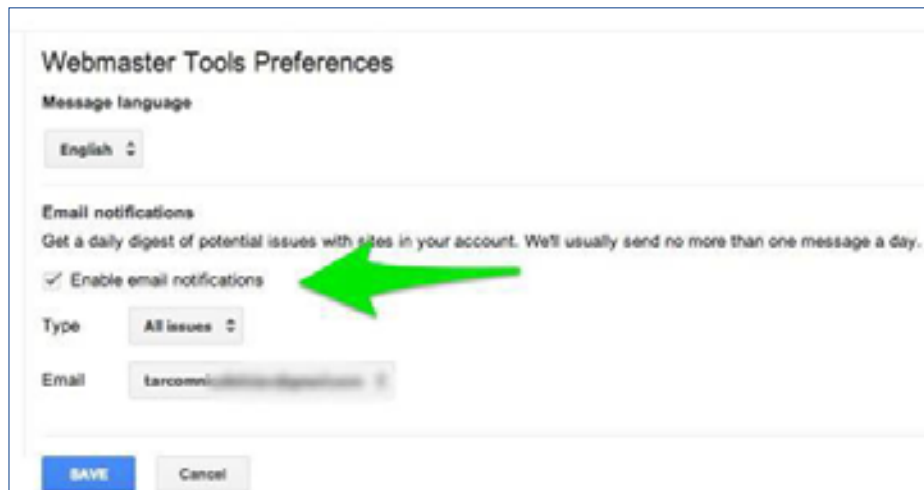
Source: <https://searchengineland.com/google-webmaster-tools-adds-settings-section-enhances-crawl-rate-controls-15733>

Clicking on the gear icon (at the top right hand corner of the page) gives you access to the tools that formerly resided in the Configuration list item.

## Webmaster Tools Preferences

In the Webmaster Tools Preferences section, you can specify whether you'd like to receive a daily digest of your messages and the e-mail account you would like to send to them.

**Figure 14. A screenshot displaying how to enable email notifications in Webmaster Tools Preferences**



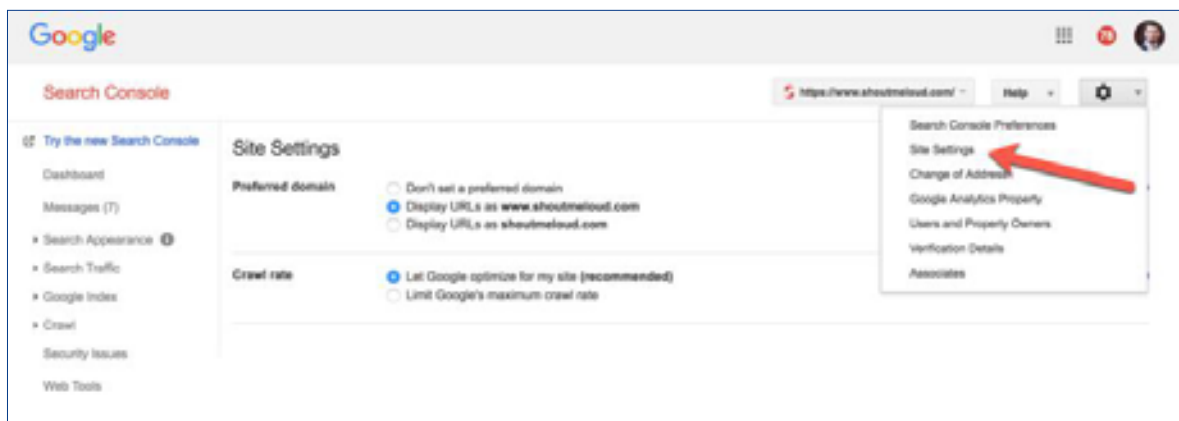
Source: <https://neilpatel.com/blog/spammers-and-negative-seo/>

## Site Settings

In Site Settings, you can set up website preferences that are not available in other places.

For example, if you have a .com website hosted in Georgia, targeting users in the UK, then there won't be very many signals to search engines about your intention. This tab allows you to set your particular geographical target to the UK.

Figure 15. Site Settings in the Search Console



Source: <https://www.shoutmeloud.com/set-your-preferred-domain-settings-using-google-webmaster-tool.html>

You can also set your preferred domain name – whether you want the website to show up in the search results with or without the “www” preface. Many websites redirect from one to the other, or contain canonical tags, which will intercept the need for setting this here, but if you don’t have that capability, this is the best way to tell Google.

The crawl rate option will allow you to slow down the rate of the Google spider crawl. You only do this if you witness server problems due to Google’s crawling. For the most part, you are going to let Google figure out what the correct crawl rate is for your website based on how frequently you add and update your content.

## Change of Address

If, on an rare occasion, you have decided to migrate your entire website to a new domain, this is where you would let Google know.

Figure 16. Change of Address page on the Google Webmaster Tools.

 The image shows the 'Change of Address' tool in Google Search Console. At the top, it says 'Change of Address' and 'Use this tool if you are moving your site to a new domain. Learn more'. Below this is a yellow warning box that says 'Don't use this tool unless you are moving your primary website presence to a new address.' The main content is a four-step process:
 

- 1 Pick your new site from the list**: 'If you don't see your site, add it now. You must specify only root-level domains with no trailing path (e.g. https://www.example.com).'. There is a 'New site' button with a dropdown arrow.
- 2 Confirm that 301-redirects work properly**: 'URLs from your old site should be redirected to your new site using permanent 301-redirect directives.'. There is a 'Check' button.
- 3 Check that verification methods are still present**: 'This step ensures your new and old sites are properly verified before the move, and will remain so afterwards.'. There is a 'Confirm' button.
- 4 Submit the change of address request**: 'Transition your site indexing from fs-duenna.com to your new site.'. There is a red 'SUBMIT' button.

Source: <https://searchengineland.com/google-revamps-change-address-tool-within-webmaster-tools-205829>

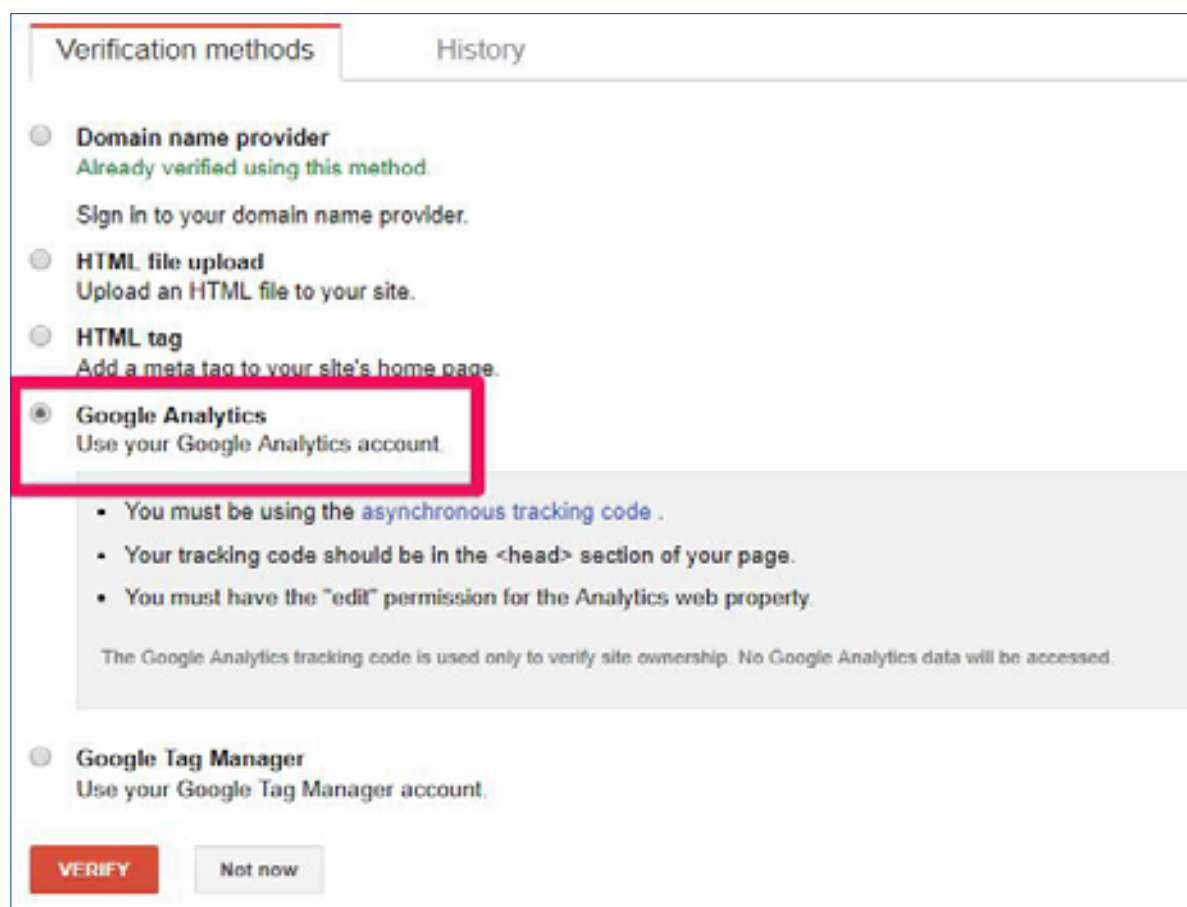
Once you've set up your new website, permanently redirected the content from your old website to your new one using the 301 redirect, and your new site has been added and verified on the Google Web Toolkit, then you come to this option and inform Google about the move.

This will help the index to be updated slightly more instantly than if Google were to just self-detect and follow the 301s.

## Google Analytics Characteristics

If you would like to see your GWT data in the Google Analytics (GA), then you can use Google Analytics Characteristics to connect the website with your analytics account.

**Figure 17. A screenshot of where to link Google Web Toolkit to your Google Analytics Account**



Source: <https://neilpatel.com/blog/google-webmaster-tools/>

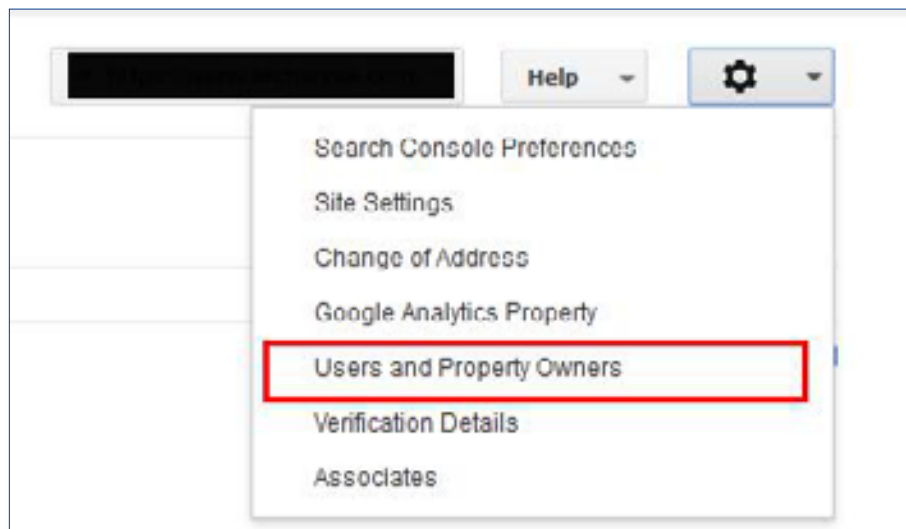
Simply select any currently linked analytics account to connect it with this website. If you do not have a GA account, you have the option to create a new one here.

## Users & Site Owners

Under the Search Console tab's Users and Property Owners option, you can see the list of all authorized users on the account, and their level of authorization.



**Figure 18. A screenshot of where to edit Users and Property Owners in the Google Webmaster Tools Search Console**



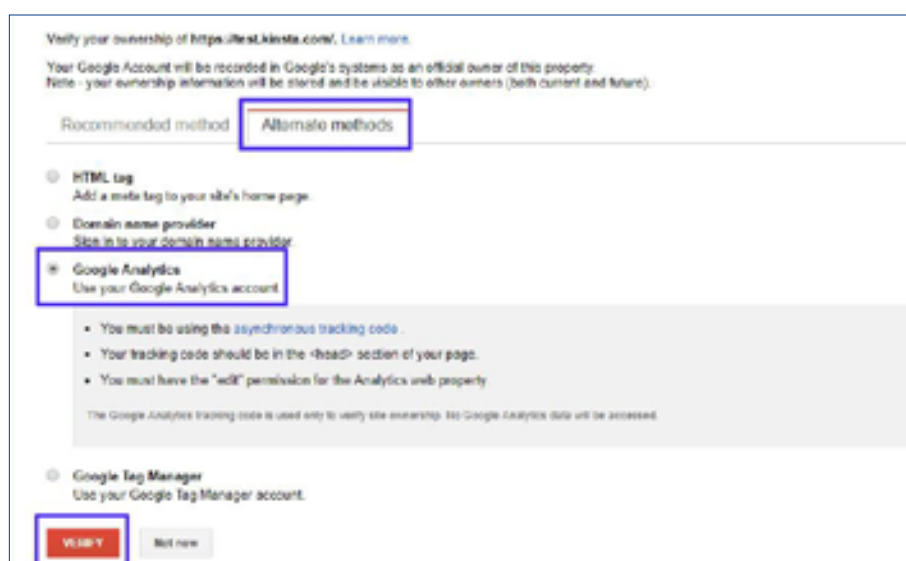
Source: <https://www.techwyse.com/blog/search-engine-optimization/how-to-add-a-user-in-google-webmaster-tools-search-console/>

A new user can be added here if necessary. Owners have permission to access every item on the website. Users with full permission can do everything except add the users, link the GA account, and inform Google to change the address. Users with restricted permissions have some limitations, such as: limited viewing capabilities on configuration data; they cannot submit sitemaps or request URL removals, they cannot submit URLs; they cannot submit reconsideration requests and they only have the permission to view crawl errors and malware notifications (they can't mark any of them as fixed).

## Verification Details

The verification details tab will allow you to see any verification issues/ successes.

**Figure 19. A screenshot of Google site verification, via the Alternate methods tab**



Source: <https://kinsta.com/blog/google-site-verification/>

## Associates

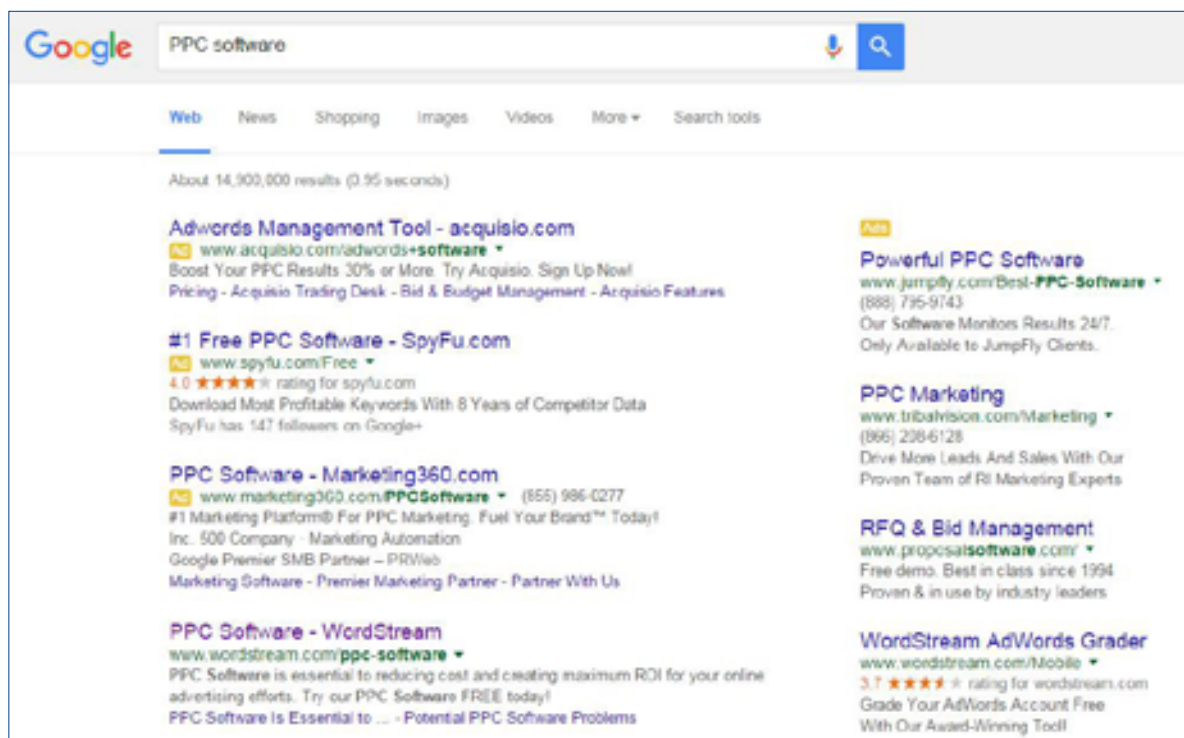
The Associates section allows you to associate different Google accounts with your GWT account, so that they can be designated as officially connected to the account/ website. They cannot look at any data in GWT, but they can perform all actions on behalf of the website (for example, creating an official YouTube account for the website, or posting to other platforms on behalf of the website through an associated account).

To add the connected user, simply:

- Click on the “Add a New User” button.
- Enter the e-mail address connected to the account you would like to associate.
- Select the type of association you wish.
- Click on the “Add” button.

## Search Appearances

Figure 20. A sample Google search demonstrates how search results appear to users



Source: <https://www.wordstream.com/serp>

## Structured Data

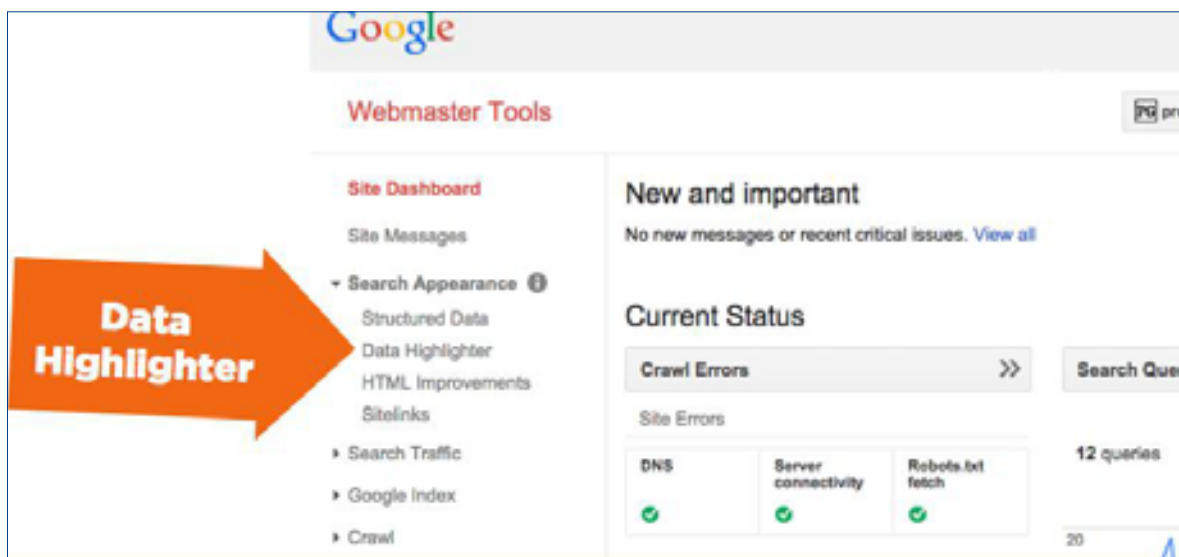
Under structured data, you can find information about the types of standardized and formatted data elements that Google will locate on your website, whether they're from schema.org or older micro formats.

**Figure 21. A sample screenshot of structured data, by items with errors (red) vs correct (blue)**

Source: <https://moz.com/ugc/how-to-fix-structured-data-markup-errors-on-existing-pages>

## Data Highlighter

The data highlighter tool allows you to help Google identify multiple types of structured data on your webpages without the need for the code to be implemented.

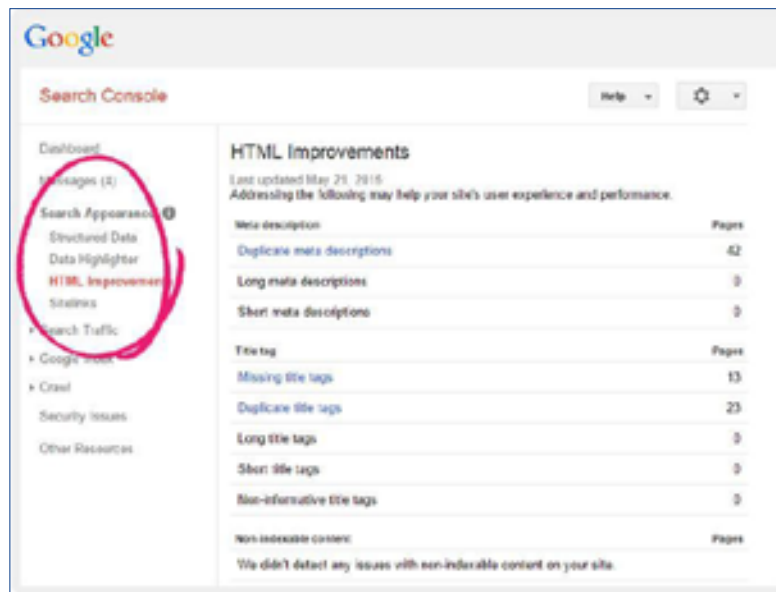
**Figure 22. A screenshot with an arrow indicating the data highlighter tool**

Source: <https://chaitanyanandigam.com/growing-importance-of-googles-data-highlighter/>

## HTML Improvements

Under HTML Improvements, GWT will inform you about the issues with your website title and description tags. As all titles and descriptions should be unique and not be copied for each webpage, as well as within certain character length ranges, this section points out where you have such issues that need to be corrected.

Figure 23. A screenshot displaying the HTML improvements section and examples



Source: <http://blog.whereoware.com/beginners-guide-to-google-search-console/2015/05/>

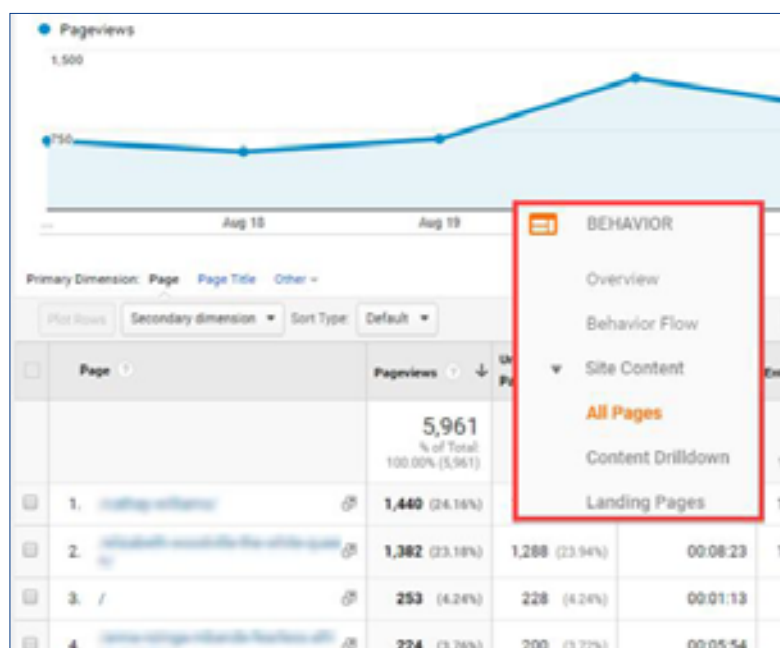
For instance, if all your tag pages have the same description, then you are not telling the search engines much about what is present on those webpages.

Clicking through on any of these errors will give you a more descriptive overview of the errors and will also give you a list of webpages on which the error was detected.

## Website Links

Whenever the Google search engine determines that your website is an authority on a specific keyword, they will show you the collection of website links under the main link, pointing to what they believe to be the most important links on that webpage.

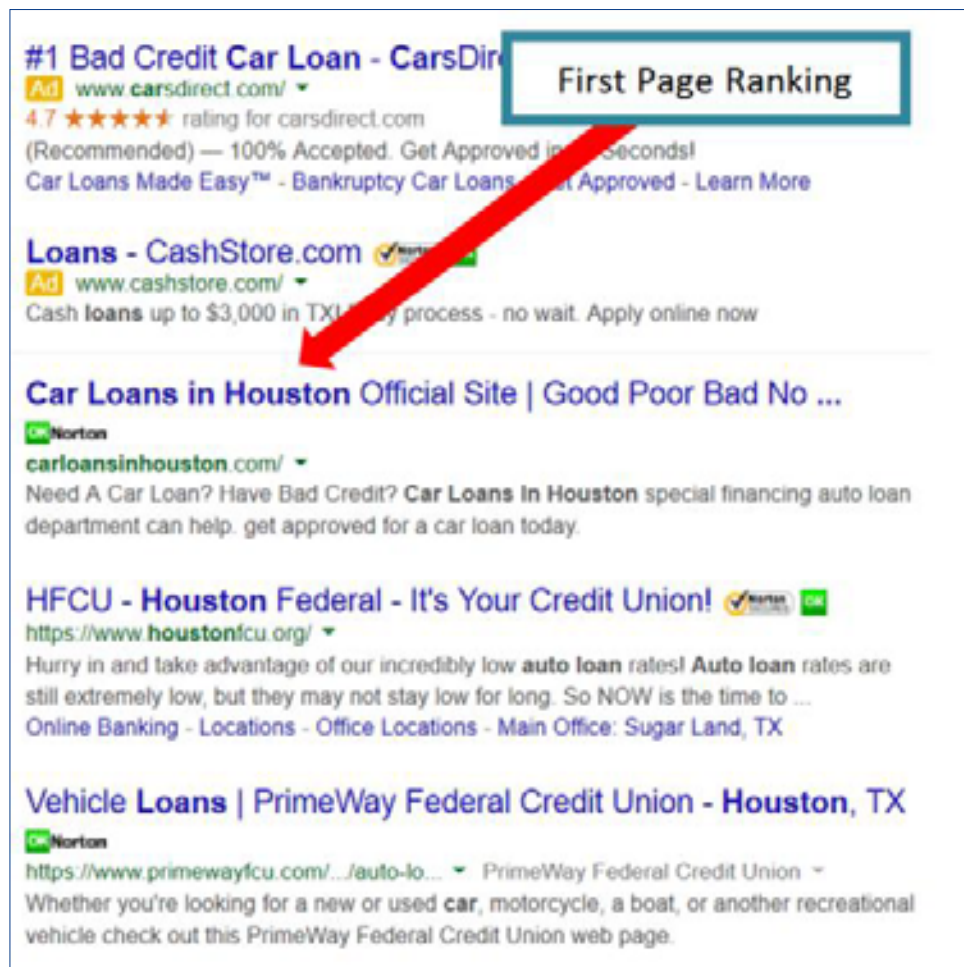
Figure 24. A screen showing an example of website links, based on page views



Source: <https://www.monsterinsights.com/how-to-track-pageviews-on-a-one-page-website-in-google-analytics/>

From time to time, Google will show you a link that you don't particularly want to be displayed, and this is where you can correct those issues.

**Figure 25. A screenshot with an arrow indicating a hypothetical link to correct**



Source: <https://www.dealerelite.net/profiles/blogs/the-importance-of-serp-for-car-dealers-search-engine-optimization>

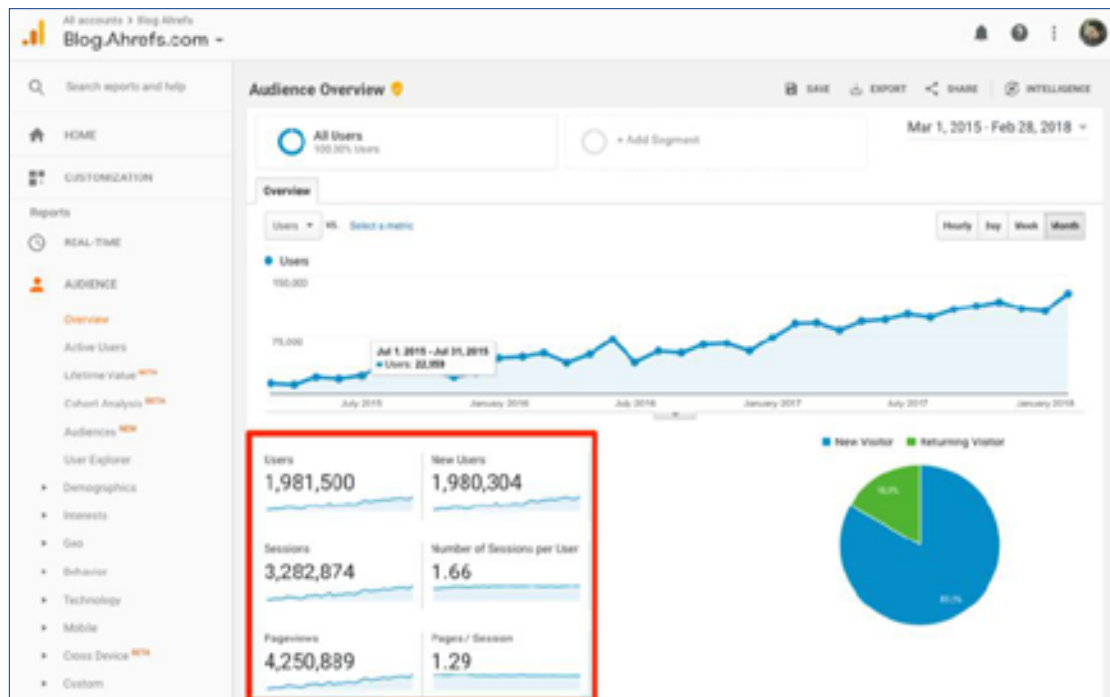
While you can not specify the number of actual pages that you want to display in the website links (that would be far too open to abuse), you can mention which pages you want to be removed. Simply enter the URL of the page with the site links (not always just the homepage), and then type in the URL of the site link that you want to be removed.

Note that the erroneous URL may then be precluded from displaying in the website links for a certain period, but may return in the future (anytime after 90 days from your last visit to the website links page) if it continues to be an important link on that page, so you have to periodically review your site links. Also, you will notice that Google has now placed a limit of 100 on the number of demotions you can have active for a specific website.

## Search Traffic

Search traffic is used to describe traffic that a site has not paid for, in contrast to paid search engine traffic, which results from people clicking through on a sponsored search result or ad. The following picture shows how the search information (traffic) is easily accessible through Google Analytics.

Figure 26. A screenshot of search traffic data accessed through Google Analytics

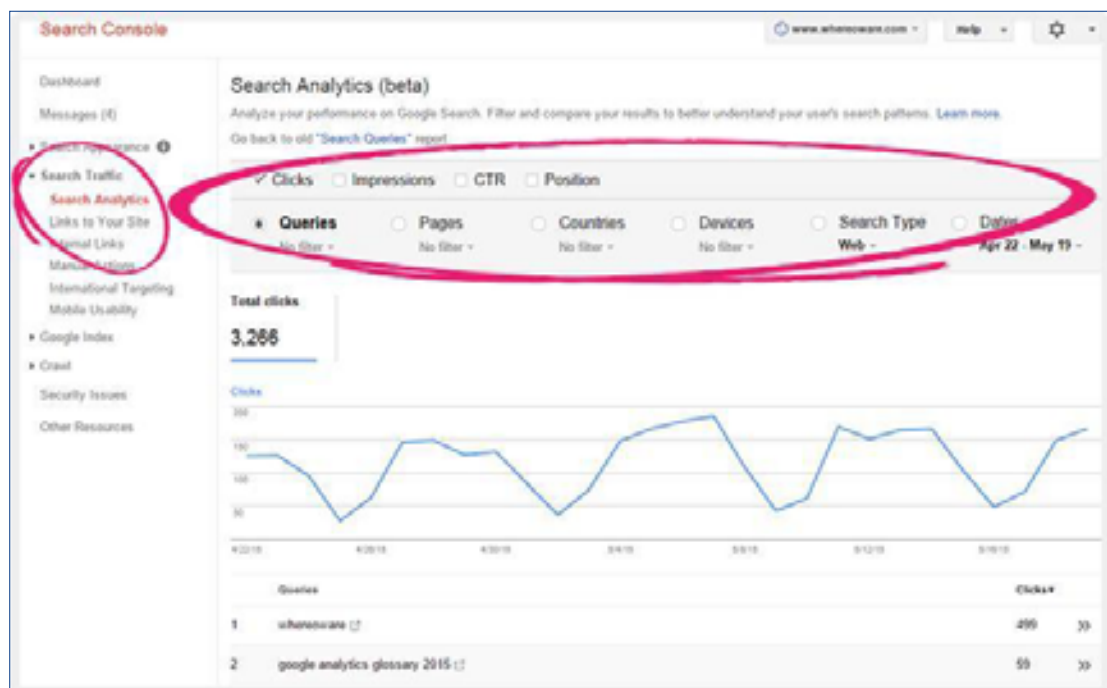


Source: <https://ahrefs.com/blog/website-traffic/>

## Search Queries

Under Search Analytics, you can get an overview of the top keywords that returned the webpage from your website in the search results. Note that the data shown here is collected in a slightly different way from your analytics platform, including GA, so don't expect the number to be exactly tallied.

Figure 27. Search Analytics on the Search Console, based on queries



Source: <http://blog.whereoware.com/beginners-guide-to-google-search-console/2015/05/>



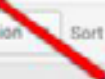
Search Analytics provides you with an idea of the top traffic-driving keywords for your website, the number of impressions and clicks, and, therefore, the click-through rate and the average position that your webpage ranks at for a particular query.

You can also view the same data by the webpage rather than by the keyword. This will show you the top traffic-generating webpages on your site and perhaps helps you identify those that you should concentrate on optimizing, as the high traffic generator in the 11th position of the SERPs would be a much higher traffic generator in the eighth.

## Links to your website

The Referral Path identifies the domains that most frequently link to you, along with those that are most linked to your website content.


**Figure 28. Referral paths to a hypothetical website, by backlinks**











Primary Dimension: Referral Path **Other** 



Plot Rows

Secondary dimension

Sort Type: Default

 advanced

Referral Path 	Acquisition			Behavior		
	Sessions  	% New Sessions 	New Users 	Bounce Rate 	Pages / Session 	Avg. Session Duration 
	2 % of Total: 0.81% (246)	50.00% Avg for View: 73.17% (-31.67%)	1 % of Total: 0.56% (180)	50.00% Avg for View: 75.20% (-33.51%)	1.50 Avg for View: 1.39 (7.89%)	00:02:00 Avg for View: 00:01:56 (86.4%)
1. /site-explorer/backlinks/v5/external-per-domain/subdomains/live/all/8/ahrefs_rank_desc 	1 (50.00%)		1 (100.00%)	0.00%	2.00	00:01:56
2. /site-explorer/backlinks/v5/external-per-domain/subdomains/recent/en/all/1/ahrefs_rank_desc 	1 (50.00%)	100.00%	1 (100.00%)	100.00%	1.00	00:01:56



Your backlinks.

Source: <https://monitorbacklinks.com/blog/seo/google-analytics-backlinks>

While it's likely that you won't see every link that Google has found for your website, you will certainly find more links here than when you visit google.com and search for "link: yoursite.com."

## Internal Links

Under the Internal Links section, you can see the top 1,000 pages on your website that will be sorted by the number of internal links to those web pages. If you have a small number of pages on your website, you can reverse the sort order by clicking on the link's header button.



Figure 29. Internal Links on Google Analytics for SEO

Target pages	Links
subscribe.aspx	26,217
http://www.fox.ie	26,117
telemicroscopy.aspx	16,734
northern-island-museum.aspx	16,385
contact.aspx	16,385
northern-island-directory.aspx	16,385
activities.aspx	16,124
news-subscribe.aspx	16,057
telemicro.aspx	17,456
northern-island-news-articles.aspx	17,386
directory/lincoln-travel-and-tourism	1,126
directory/lincoln-shopping	517
directory/lincoln-construction	516

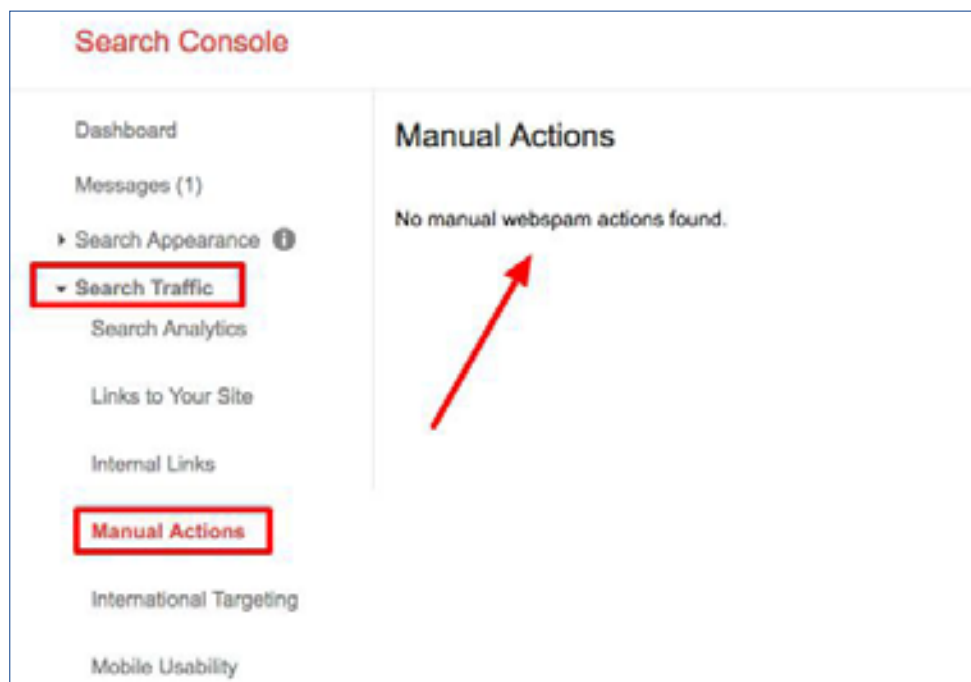
Source: <https://www.iqseo.org/building-internal-links-for-seo-wins/>

Any webpage that shows zero internal links has to be orphaned and should either be linked to from somewhere on your website or redirected to an appropriate page if they're old legacy webpages.

### Manual Actions

The Google search engine uses the Manual Actions section to inform you of any site-wide or section/ page specific manual actions that they have applied to your website.

Figure 30. A manual actions search on a hypothetical site, according to web spam actions

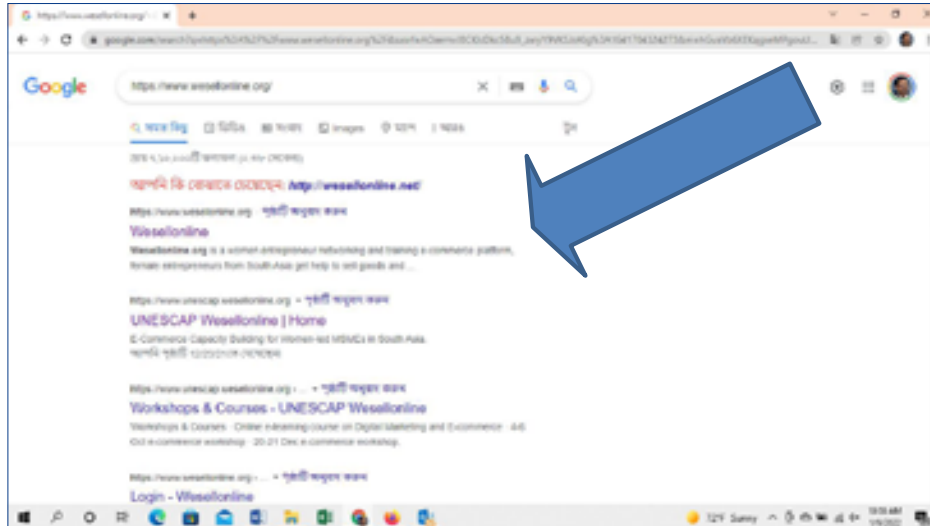


Source: <https://www.myriamjessier.com/blog/5-types-of-google-penalties/>

## Google Index

A page is indexed by Google if it has been visited by the Google crawler ("Googlebot"), analyzed for content and meaning, and stored in the Google index.

**Figure 31. A screenshot of wesellonline.org reflects its status in the Google index.**



Source: <https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/7645831?hl=en>

## Index Status

The Index Status will allow you to track the status of your website within the Google Index.

How many webpages are they showing as being indexed? Are there any concerning trends? Have you accidentally blocked the large sections of your website from Google bot? This is a great place to get the answers to those questions and more.

**Figure 32. A hypothetical website status in the index declines, by date**



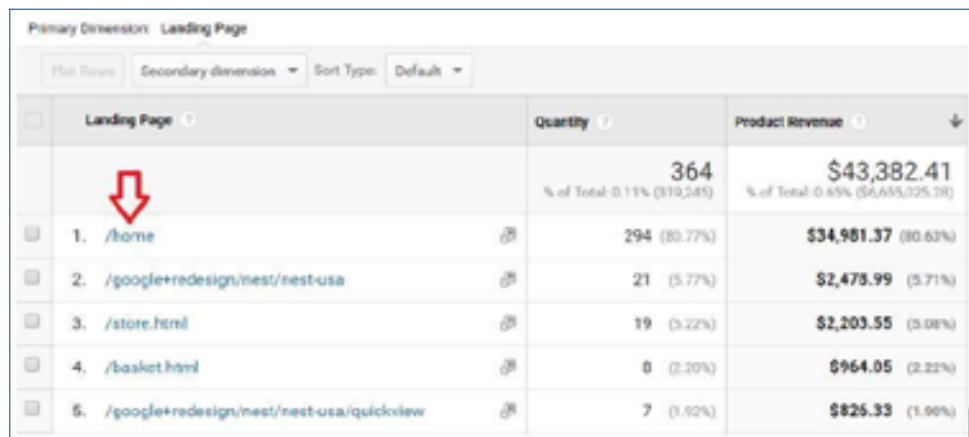
Source: <https://support.google.com/webmasters/forum/AAAA2Jdx3sU2amKTSXM1lo/?hl=sv>

## Content Keywords

Content keywords display the most general keywords found by Google crawler as it navigates your website. One thing to keep an eye on here is if you see unexpected, unrelated keywords

being displayed, it is usually an indication that your website has been hacked and hidden keywords may have been injected into your webpages.

**Figure 33. Performing keywords in Google Analytics, by landing page quantity**



Landing Page	Quantity	Product Revenue
1. /home	364 % of Total: 0.11% (\$19,245)	\$43,382.41 % of Total: 0.65% (\$6,655,325.38)
2. /google+redesign/nest/nest-usa	21 (5.77%)	\$2,478.99 (5.71%)
3. /store.html	19 (5.22%)	\$2,203.55 (5.08%)
4. /basket.html	0 (2.20%)	\$964.05 (2.22%)
5. /google+redesign/nest/nest-usa/quickview	7 (1.62%)	\$825.33 (1.90%)

Source: <https://www.optimizesmart.com/how-to-find-top-performing-keywords-in-google-analytics/>

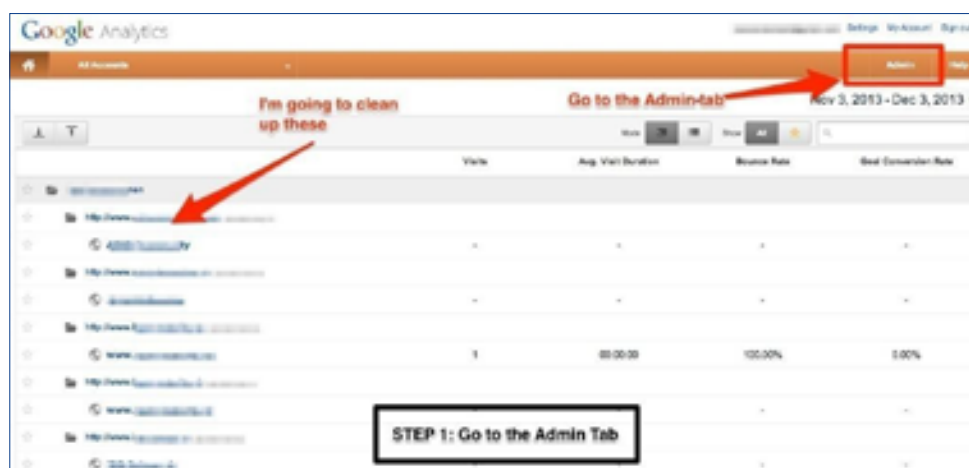
## Remove URLs

If you receive a letter from an attorney/lawyer demanding you to delete the webpage from your website — which may occur, for example, if you accidentally break a news embargo or release an obituary while the person is still breathing — you need to get that webpage out of Google as soon as possible.

The first step is to either delete the webpage itself or make it 301 (which indicates that the resource requested has been moved to a different web address). Once this action is complete, it will be impossible for search engines to crawl and index the webpages. While this will prevent users and crawlers from getting to it, the URL will still be in the index, and the webpage can still be found in the cache. It is in this scenario that the remove URL tool can be used.

Enter the URL that you want to remove, click on the “Continue” button, and then select whether you want the URL removed from the search results and the cache, from only the cache, or if you want the entire directory to be removed. Clicking on “Submit Request” adds the URL to the queue for removal. Generally, this request will be processed in between two and 12 hours’ time.

**Figure 34. Step 1 to remove URLs from your website**

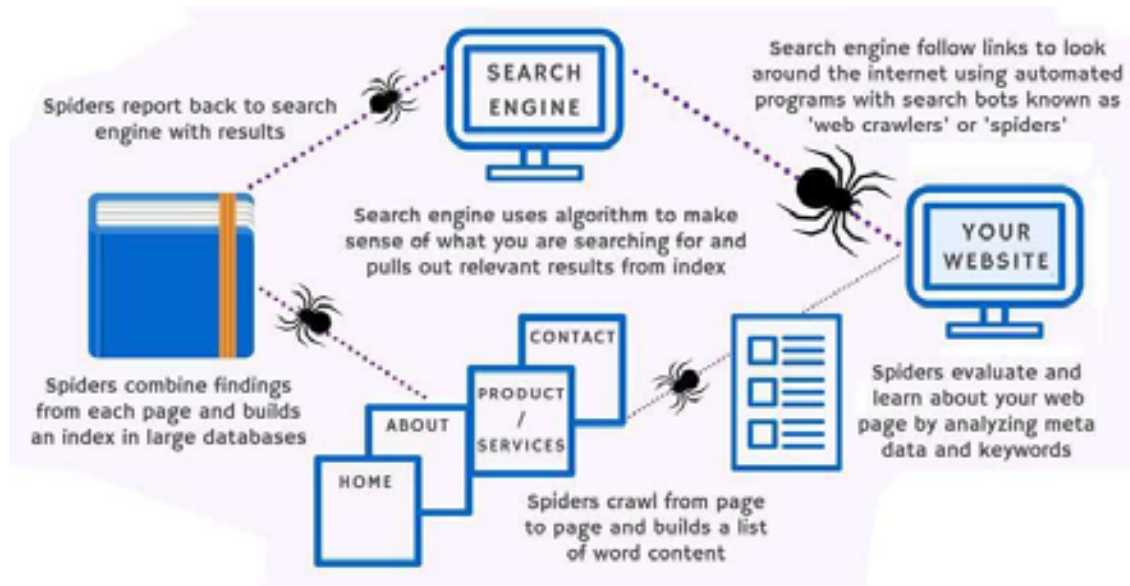


Source: <https://www.stateofdigital.com/remove-website-google-analytics/>

## Crawl

Crawling is the discovery process in which search engines send out a team of robots (known as crawlers or spiders) to find new and updated content.

**Figure 35. The process by which search engine 'spiders' crawl through indexes seeking content for a user-generated query**



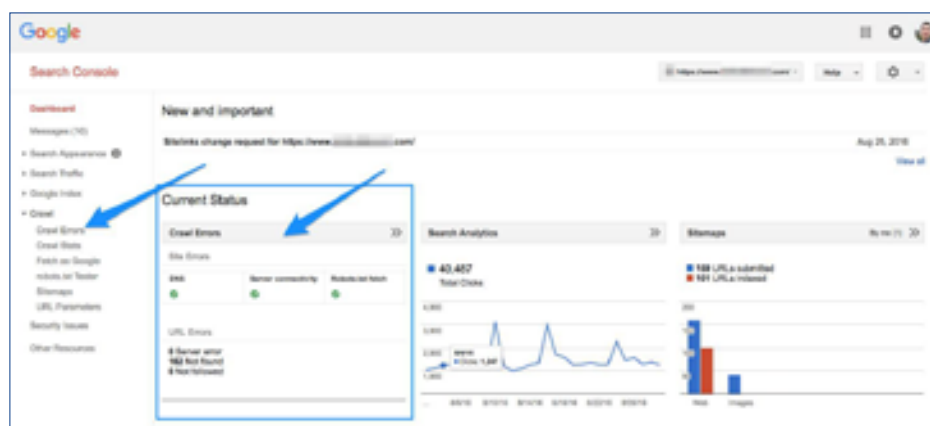
Source: <https://www.hostgator.com/blog/how-search-engines-work/>

The crawl stats section gives you an idea of how fast the crawlers can read the webpages on your website. It is normal for crawling spikes to occur, but if you see significant shifts such as a sustained drop in webpage crawling or a sustained spike in time spent downloading the webpage, or in the size of a webpage, it is an indication that you should take a glance and see what has changed on your website. Most likely you added a new partner module that has created a bigger than expected addition to the footprint on the website.

## Site Errors

In Site Errors, you will find out about the errors that Google has identified when crawling your website over the past 90 days. This is an invaluable tool as it can help you identify multiple issues on your website.

**Figure 36. Google detects errors, by site and URL**



Source: <https://moz.com/blog/how-to-fix-crawl-errors-in-google-search-console>

GWT will show you the number of errors, list of webpages, and show you the graph of your count over time for that particular error so that you can look into whether it has been a gradual change or a more instant occurrence (perhaps a code push caused unforeseen errors with the section of the website that no one noticed).

This section should be a frequent port of call, as you keep an eye out for any new issues that could affect the crawling of your website. If your website has either mobile presence or is present on the Google News platform, you can see the tabs dedicated to any of the crawl errors specific to those products.

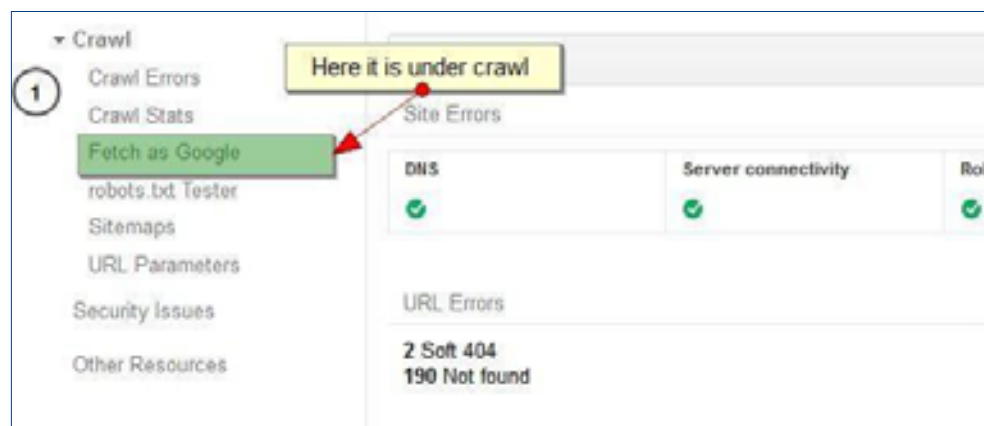
## Fetch as Google

Here, you can see your webpages the way Google sees them. They will respond to the HTTP response, the date and time, and the HTML code, including the first 100kb of visible text on the webpage.

This is a way to verify that Google crawls the webpage as you expect it to (remember that the crawler is supposed to see the same page as the user would see them), and that there are no externally injected hidden links on the webpage.

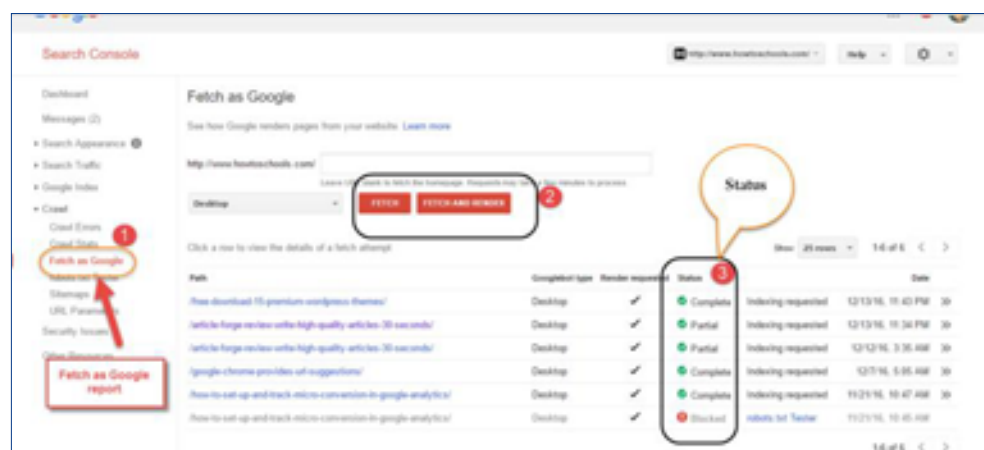
If the webpage looks as you expect it to, then you can submit it to the index. You are allowed 500 fetches/submissions for a week, and 10 linked webpage submissions per week (submitting a page and all pages linked to it at the same time).

**Figure 37. Fetch as Google identified under crawl in the Google Console**



Source: <https://searchengineland.com/how-to-use-fetch-as-googlebot-like-seo-samurai-214292>

**Figure 38. Fetch status in a Google report, according to the Search Console**

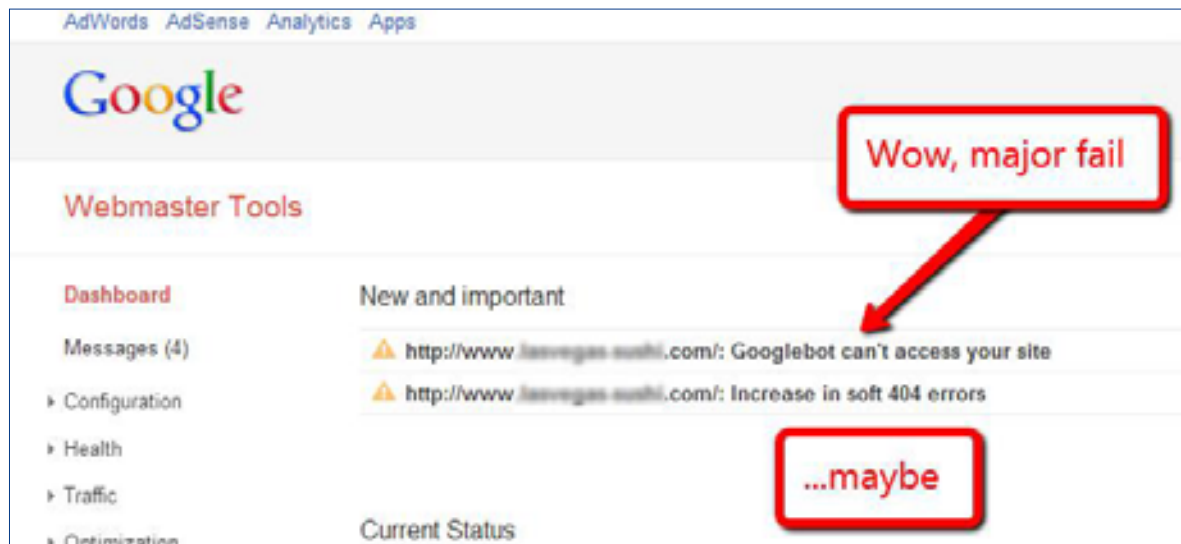


Source: <http://www.digitalgenx.com/how-to-solve-partial-status-issue-in-fetch-as-google-report-of-search-console/>

## Blocked URLs

This section is the place to test out your current robots.txt against any web pages on your website to verify whether they can be crawled or not. You can also test out the changes to your robots.txt to see whether they are working as you test it against different pages on your site.

**Figure 39. Inaccessible URLs or error messages in Webmaster Tools**

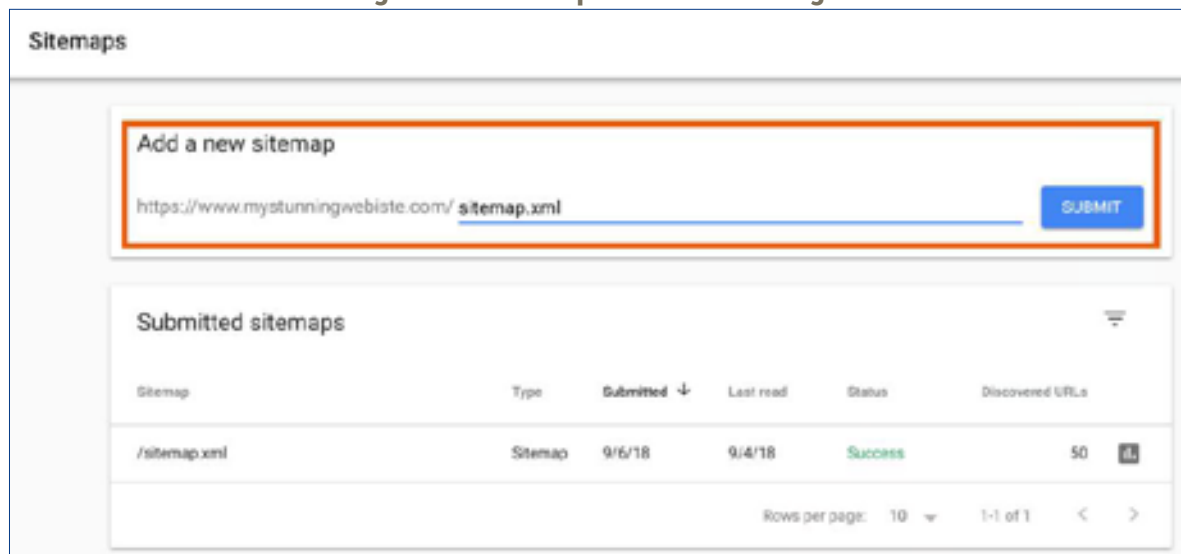


Source: <https://www.horizonwebmarketing.com/google-webmaster-tools-and-blocked-urls/>

## Sitemaps

Sitemaps is where you can get all of the information about the sitemaps that GWT is aware of. To test the sitemap of the website, click on the "Add/ Test" sitemap button, and GWT will inform you if the sitemap appears to be valid or not. If it is, then simply add the sitemap using the same procedure, without clicking on the "Add sitemap" button.

**Figure 40. Sitemap additions to Google**



Source: <https://support.wix.com/en/article/submitting-your-sitemap-directly-to-google>

You should note that the default view here is only to show the sitemaps that you have added. To display those that have been added by other authorized users on the account, click the “All” tab button. The webpage shows you the sitemaps that you have submitted, the number of web pages that they have found in each, and the number of those web pages that they have indexed. You can also see quite clearly if there are any problems or issues that they have detected within your sitemaps. Simply click on the warnings hyperlink to see them all.

## URL Parameters

With the introduction and the use of the canonical tags, this feature isn’t used as much as it used to be earlier. What it does is that it allows you to specify the URL query string parameters that shouldn’t be considered when examining the URLs on the website to determine whether the URL is unique or not.

**Figure 41. Parameters of a URL**

1.	/register.php?action=activate&uid=7113&key=6a9ac3e4b5d9a4d86d
2.	/register.php?action=activate&uid=7144&key=3f58f2a47b4d7a4a85c1
3.	/register.php?action=activate&uid=6944&key=eb7f2976230a8444f6
4.	/register.php?action=activate&uid=6785&key=3e8d3a26424b4444180
5.	/register.php?action=activate&uid=6787&key=21c1f1a3944b4a2b4a6
6.	/register.php?action=activate&uid=6817&key=f6a3a2a4714a2a704ae0
7.	/register.php?action=activate&uid=6829&key=cd20433b49a4b421014
8.	/register.php?action=activate&uid=6834&key=9bd4975a2ba4a491fd4
9.	/register.php?action=activate&uid=6835&key=298fc5a45c49a42747a
10.	/register.php?action=activate&uid=6835&key=1dbf84a44b4a4a2b48c

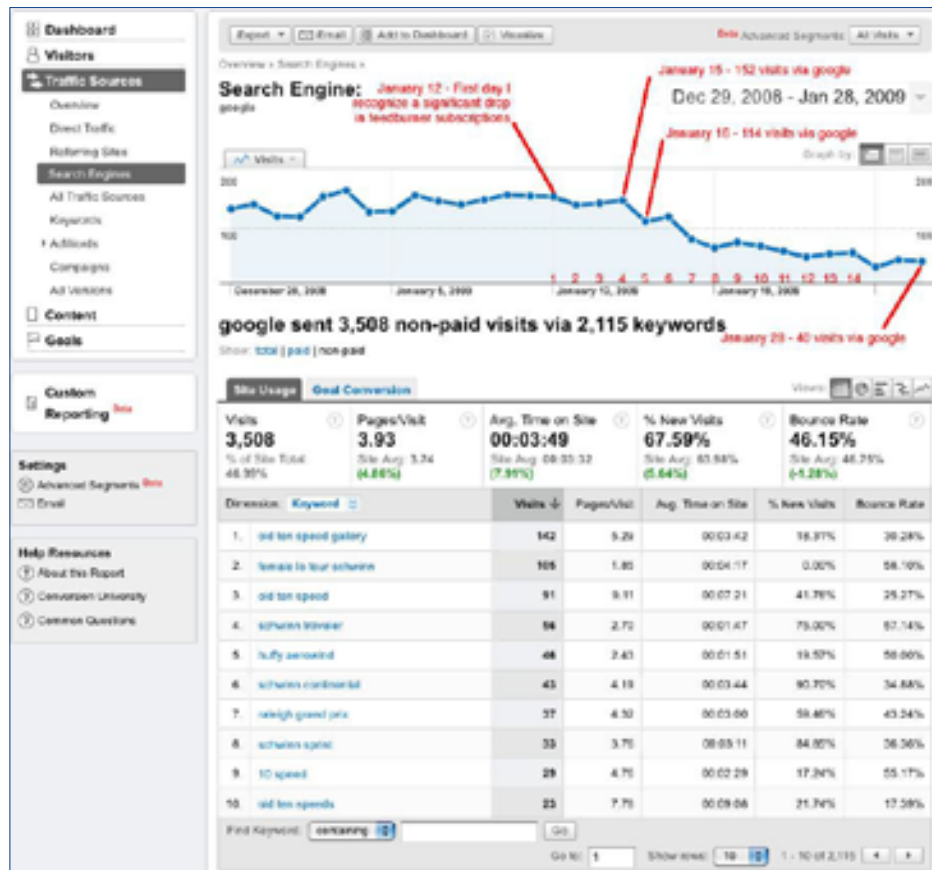
Source: <https://www.blackdog.ie/blog/filtering-url-parameters-in-ga/>

## Security Issues

If the Google search engine has detected any malware or other security issues on the website, then this is where they will list it out (it will also appear in the messages section). You need to look at the webpage and fix it as soon as possible and click on the “Request a Review” button. [8]



**Figure 42. A screenshot of website data revealing unusual site activity, signifying a security issue**

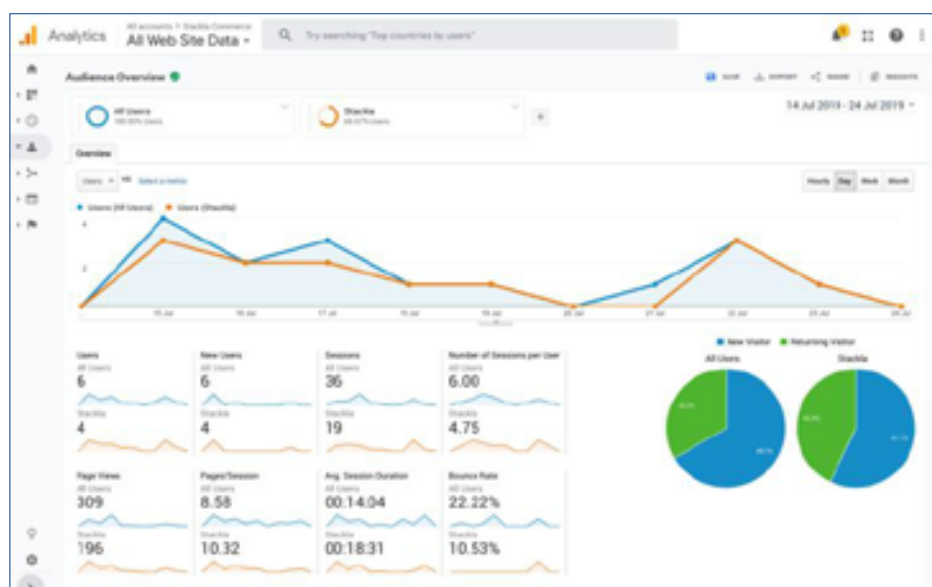


Source: <http://blog.unmaskparasites.com/2009/02/05/stats-anomaly-reveals-website-security-issues/>

## Other Resources

This section contains the links to tools that are outside the GWT, but they are of interest to the webmasters, such as the Structured Data Testing Tool, which will allow the webmasters to test their schema implementations, the Structured Data Mark-up Helper, and other useful tools.

**Figure 43. A screenshot of the audience overview resource in Google Analytics**



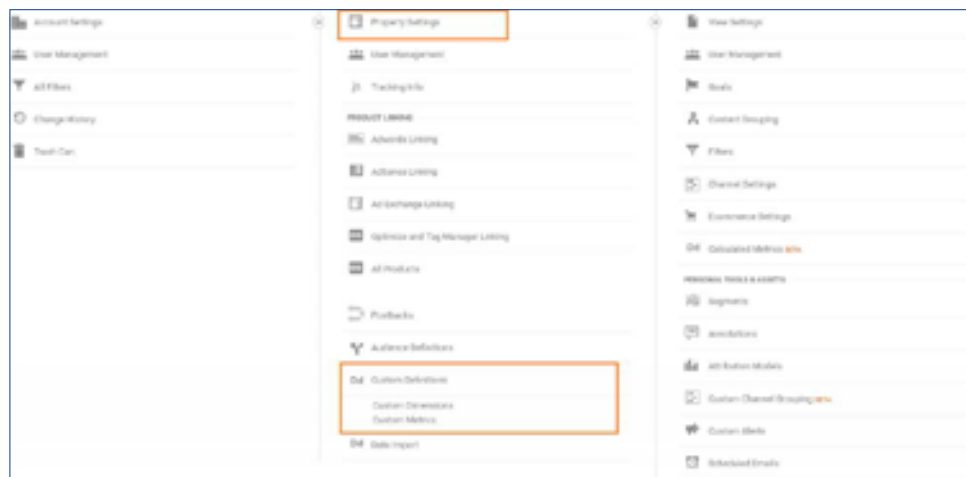
Source: <https://developer.stackla.com/analytics/google/resources/>

## Labs

The labs section contains functionality that is in the testing mode. When it's deemed to be "ready for prime time," it will be promoted to the regular sections of the GWT, or it may just destroy it if it's confirmed to be not useful.

## Author Stats

**Figure 44. A screenshot of access to author statistics, through customized dimensions in the Google Web Toolkit**

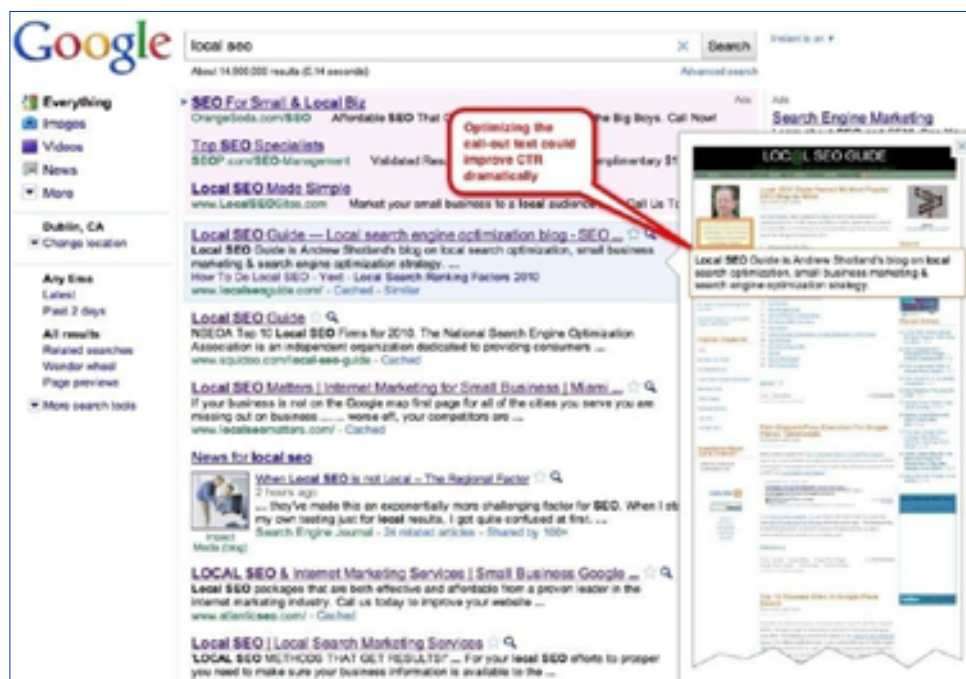


Source: <https://digitalashva.com/wordpress/track-wordpress-author-stats-implement-custom-dimension-in-ga-using-gtm/>

## Instant Previews

The instant previews tool allows you to see how your website looks using Google's Instant Preview Feature (the view of your website that can be seen in the search results when you move your mouse over the double arrows that will show up next to a result).

**Figure 45. Local SEO results in instant preview**



Source: <https://www.localseoguide.com/google-instant-previews-instant-seo/>

## 1.3 Accessing and creating social media accounts for digital marketing and e-commerce

### 1.3.1 Facebook

Facebook has become the most popular platform for MSMEs and home-based women entrepreneurs operating businesses online. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the trend of online businesses conducted through social media platforms has become more eminent.

#### Creating a Facebook account:

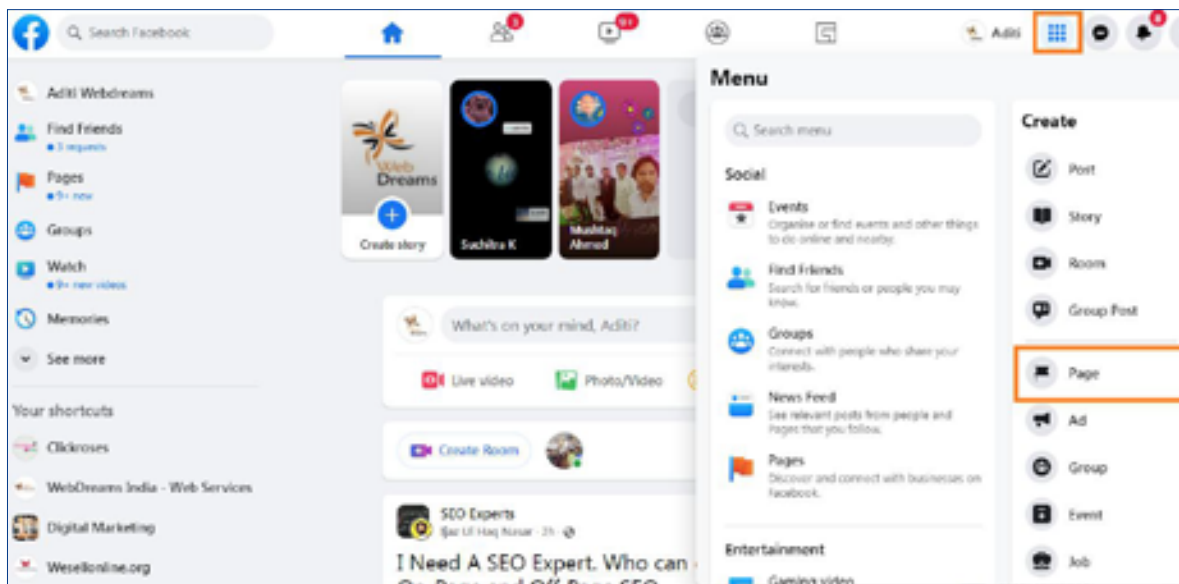
1. Go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)
2. Enter your name, e-mail or mobile phone number, password, date of birth, and gender.
3. Click on **Sign Up**.
4. To finish creating your account, you need to confirm your e-mail or mobile phone number.

#### Creating a Facebook business page:

Follow these seven steps to learn how to create a Facebook business page:

##### Step 1: Register for a Facebook business page

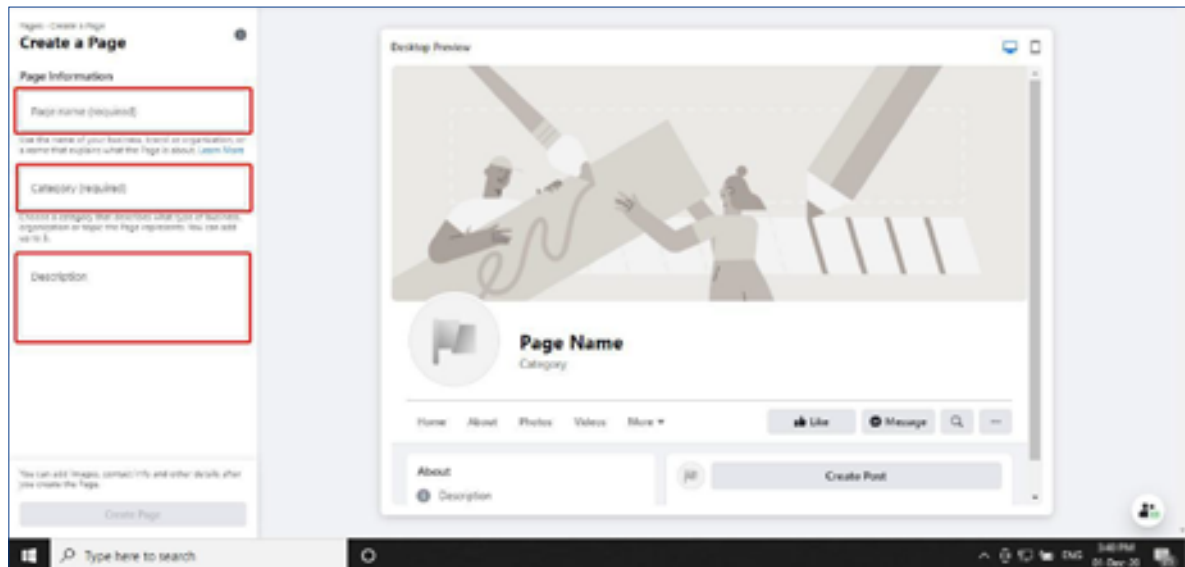
Facebook business pages are created using a personal Facebook account, so you'll need to first log in to your Facebook account. On the right-hand side of the blue toolbar, find and click the icon showing nine dots.



Select "Page" from the Menu. A drop-down list will appear after clicking "Create." Select the first option, "Page," to create your Facebook Business Page.

##### Step 2: Choose a Page Category

You will have to fill in some basic information and select the relevant category to start your Facebook page.



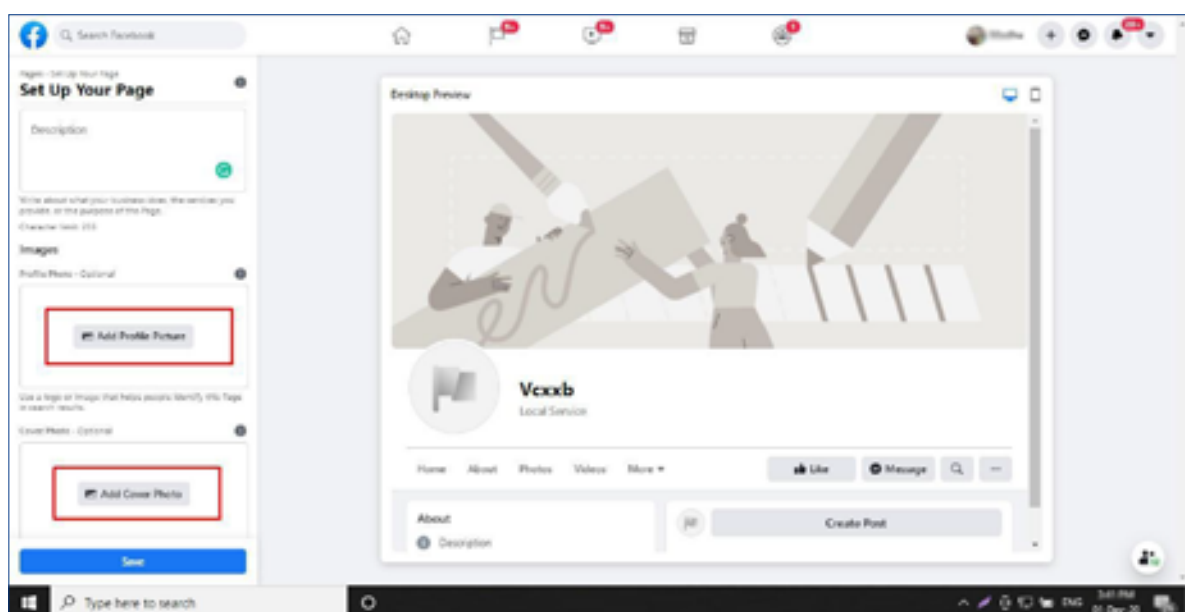
### Step 3: Enter your business information

Name your business page and provide basic information about your products or services. This should be the same as your actual business name. Then, choose a business category that best represents what your business offers. For example, a clothing brand could enter "Clothing," which will then pre-populate a list of related options for you to choose from.

### Step 4: Upload your profile picture & cover photo

Choose a photo to upload as your business page profile picture. Entrepreneurs commonly use their logo as a profile picture, but you may use any photo that represents your business and your business' branding. Be sure that your image is clear and doesn't get cropped.

There are websites like Fiverr (Freelance Services Marketplace for Businesses, [www.fiverr.com](http://www.fiverr.com)) which can be used to design a professional profile picture for you, including the logo, if you don't have an image in mind that you'd like to use or need a new one.



Next, consider uploading a cover photo. A cover photo is the background image that appears on your Facebook Business Page, similar to your personal Facebook account. You want your cover photo to be visually appealing and representative of your business. Your cover photo should be at least 400 pixels wide by 150 pixels tall. Many Facebook page templates are available for your small business.

If you are having trouble finding a cover image, you can create one for free using the free version of design platform Canva. It includes many Facebook cover templates that you can easily customize without any graphic design skills or knowledge.

### Step 5: Invite friends to like your page

Facebook will prompt you to invite your current Facebook friends from your account to like your new business page. Existing Facebook friends can provide an excellent initial base of likes for a new Facebook Business Page, so it is advised to go ahead and do this. Either click the pop-up prompt or invite friends manually, as illustrated below.

**Figure 46. Using the example of “WebDreams e-services” user steps are displayed in the images below**

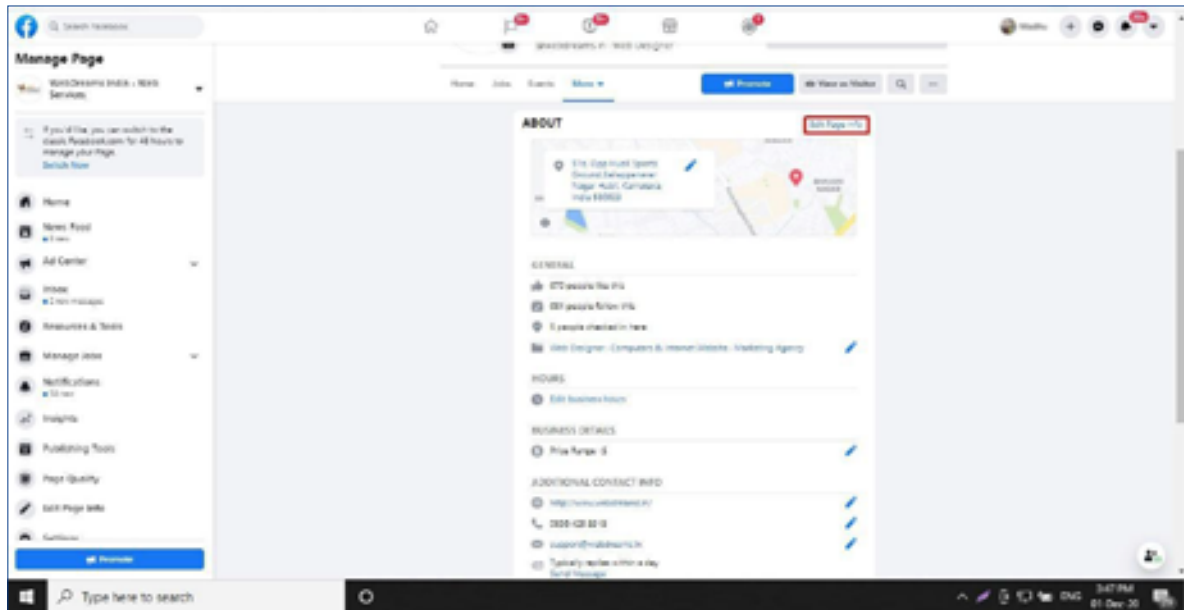


Source: <https://www.facebook.com/webdreams.in>

### Step 6: Include additional business details

On the left-hand menu, find and select “About.” This is where you will tell readers about your business and also about how they can contact you. Enter all the required information, such as your website, your hours of operation, and contact information.

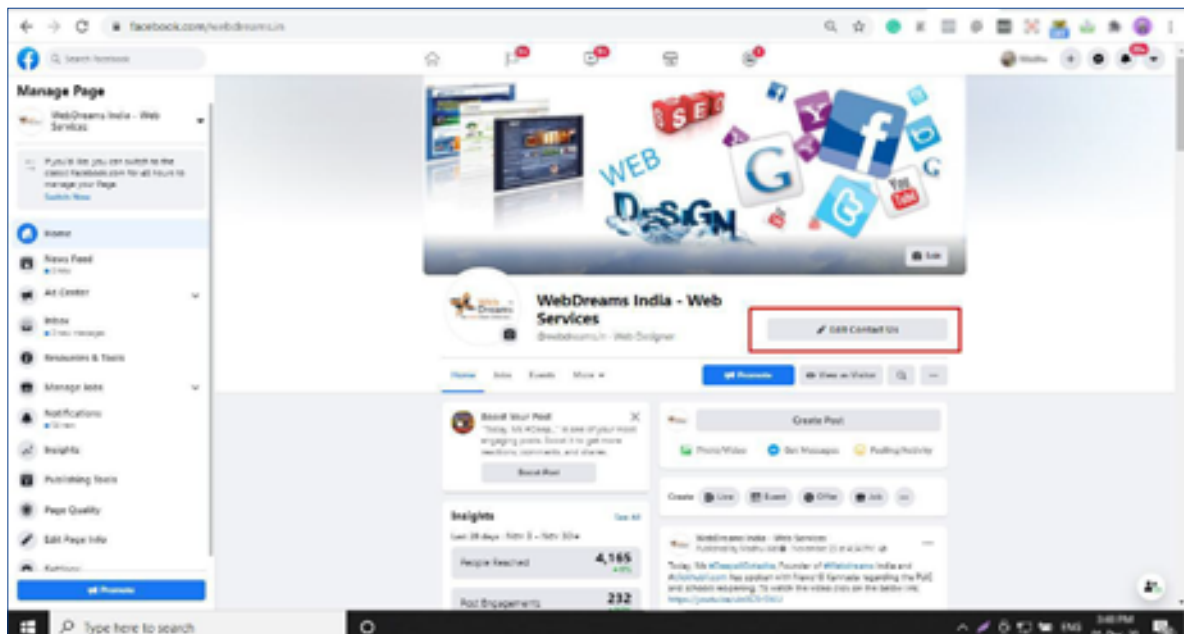
It’s not uncommon for a business’s Facebook page to rank higher in organic search than their website, given Facebook’s domain authority. Keeping this in mind, it’s essential to complete all information, as it may be a potential customer’s first point of reference for your business.



Source: [https://www.facebook.com/webdreams.in/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/webdreams.in/about/?ref=page_internal)

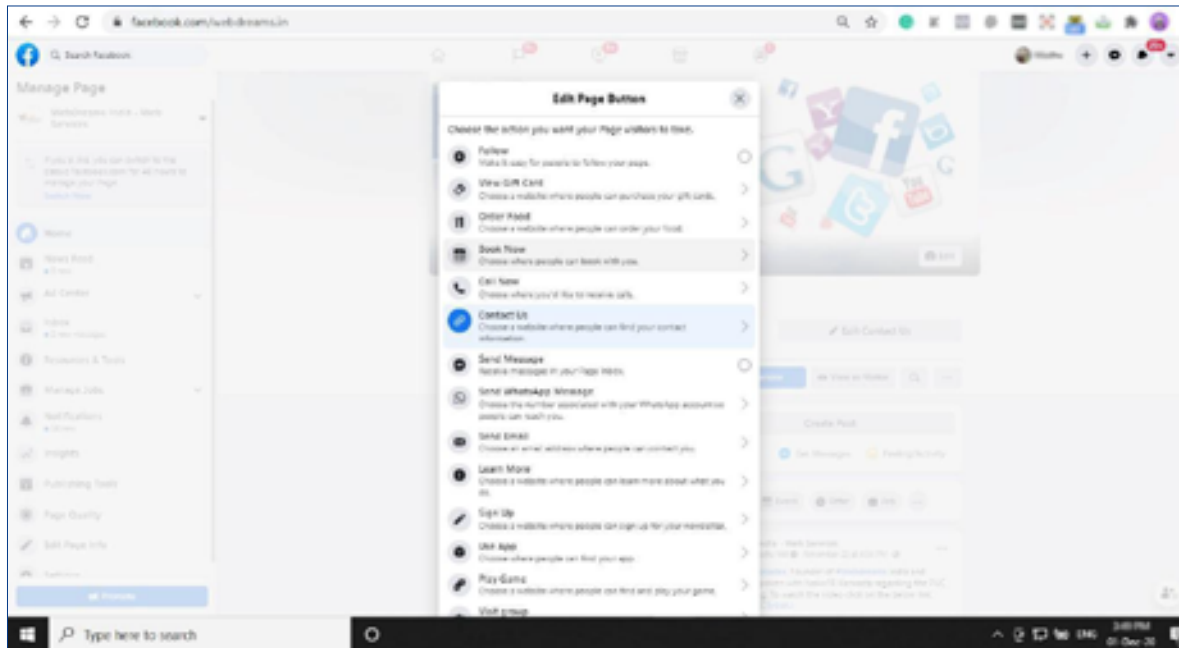
### Step 7: Add a button to your page

After including all the essential information into your Facebook business page, you will be required to add a button to your page, which will appear on the top right-hand of your business page below your cover photo. This acts as your Facebook page's call-to-action (CTA) and is free to use. Including a relevant one to your business can help generate more leads, and in return, increase sales. To do this, click the blue "+ Add a Button" option on the left-hand side of your page below your cover image.



You can choose from the following types of buttons: Book with You, Contact You, Learn More, Shop, or Download. Select the button that best suits your business. For example, a hair salon would most likely want to use the "Book with You" option, whereas a brand selling products would find the Shop option a better fit.





## Market your Facebook business page by making it more active

Creating a Facebook Business Page is only the first step of using Facebook marketing for your business. You will need to be active on Facebook to market your page to expand your customer base. For example, you will not only have to consistently keep posting on your page, but also have to actively participate in relevant groups where your target audience is likely to spend their time.

### 1.3.2 Google Business Account

#### What is Google My Business (GMB)?

GMB is a free tool that lets you manage how your business appears on Google Search and Maps. That includes adding your business name, location, and hours, monitoring and replying to customer reviews, adding photos, learning where and how people are searching for you, and more.

If you're just getting started with local SEO, your Google My Business listing is a great place to focus your early efforts. After all, when people search for a product or service near them, they're usually very close to making a purchase — one out of two people who conduct a local search (think "watch repair near me") visit a store that same day. So, it's important that the information which shows up about your business when people search on Google is accurate, complete and optimized as much as possible.

#### Create a Google My Business Listing

Step 1: Log in to your Google Account that you want to use to run your business (or create a Google Account if you don't already have one).

Step 2: Go to [google.com/business](https://google.com/business) and select "Start now" on the top right-hand corner.

Step 3: Enter your business name.



The screenshot shows the Google My Business creation interface. The title is "What's the name of your business?". Below it is a text input field containing "NADCHASMA India - 10 years Experienced Web Design". A red rectangle highlights this input field. Below the input field is a link for "Terms of Service and Privacy Policy" and a blue "Next" button. The browser address bar shows "business.google.com/create".

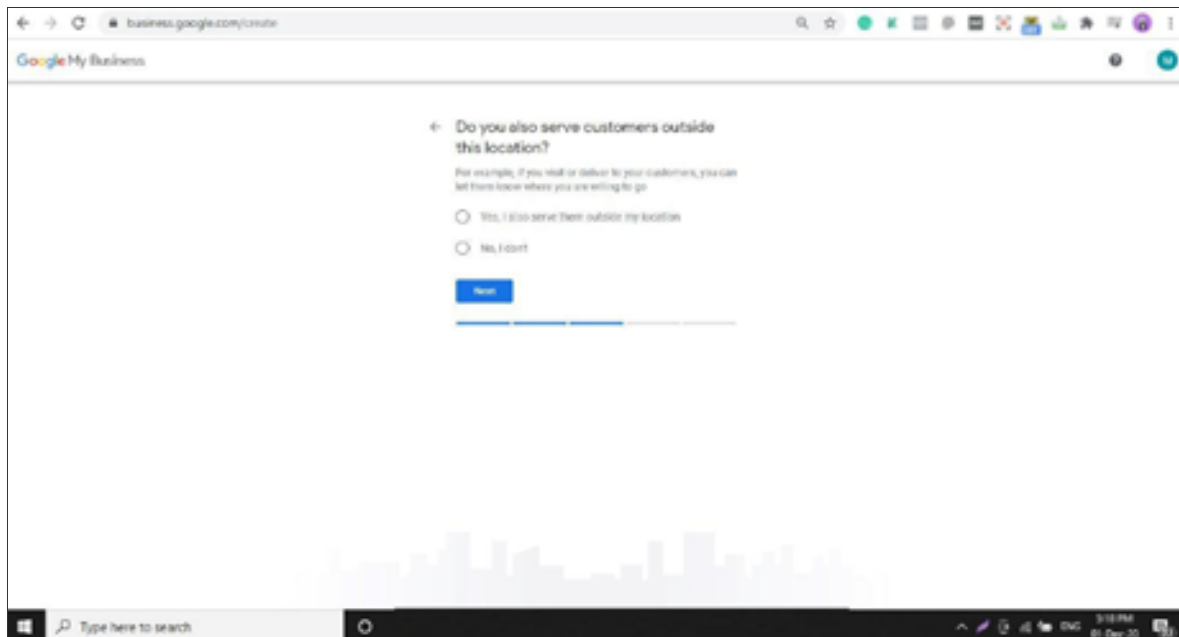
Source: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/google-my-business>

Step 4: Enter your business address.

The screenshot shows the Google My Business creation interface for the address step. The title is "What's the address?". Below it are several input fields: a dropdown for "India", a text field for "Street address", a text field for "City", a text field for "Pincode", and a dropdown for "State". A blue "Next" button is at the bottom. The browser address bar shows "business.google.com/create".

Source: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/google-my-business>

Step 5: If you provide service to your customers' locations, rather than having them come to you, check the box, "I deliver goods and services to my customers." If you work out of your house or another address and you don't want it to be publicly shown, Check "Hide my address (it's not a store) Only show region." Finally, select your delivery area.



Source: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/google-my-business>

Step 6: Choose your business category. Try to choose the most accurate category possible, you're essentially telling Google which type of customers should see your business listing.

Step 7: Add your business phone number or website.

Step 8: Choose a verification option. If you're not ready to verify your business yet, click "Try a different method," → "Later".

### 1.3.3 Creating other Social Media Platforms like Instagram (IG), Pinterest, LinkedIn, Twitter, Daraz, etc.:

- **Creating an Account on Instagram:**



**To create an Instagram account from the app:**

Step 1. Download the Instagram app from the App Store (iPhone) or Google Play Store (Android).

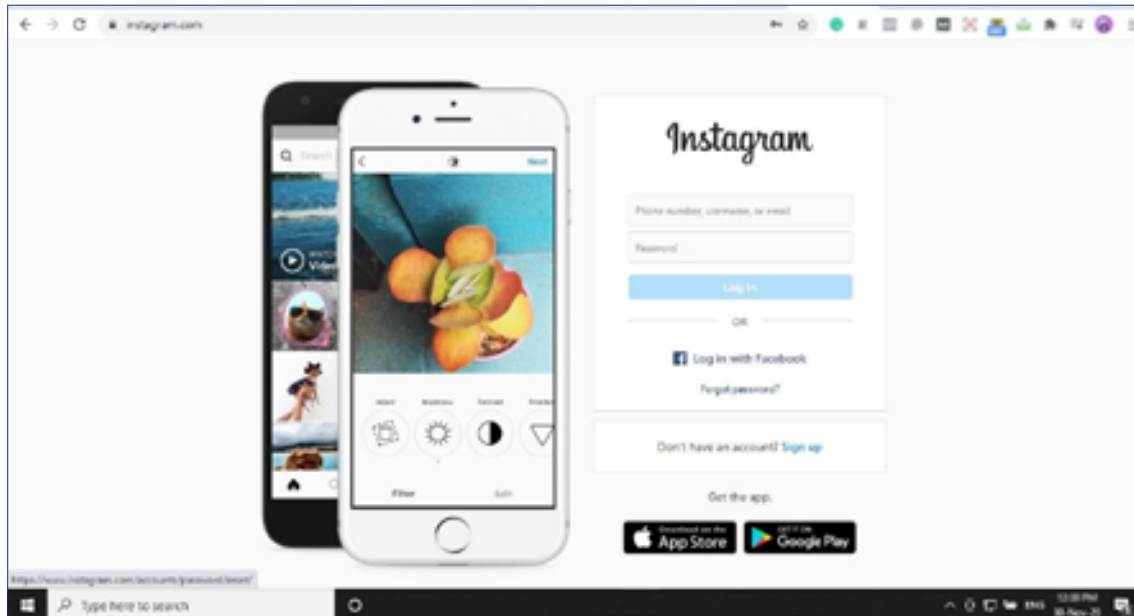
Step 2. Once the app is installed, tap to open it.

Step 3. Tap **Sign up with Email or Phone Number** (Android) or **Create New Account** (iPhone), then enter your email address or phone number (which will require a confirmation code) and tap **Next**. You can also tap **Login with Facebook** to sign up with your Facebook account.

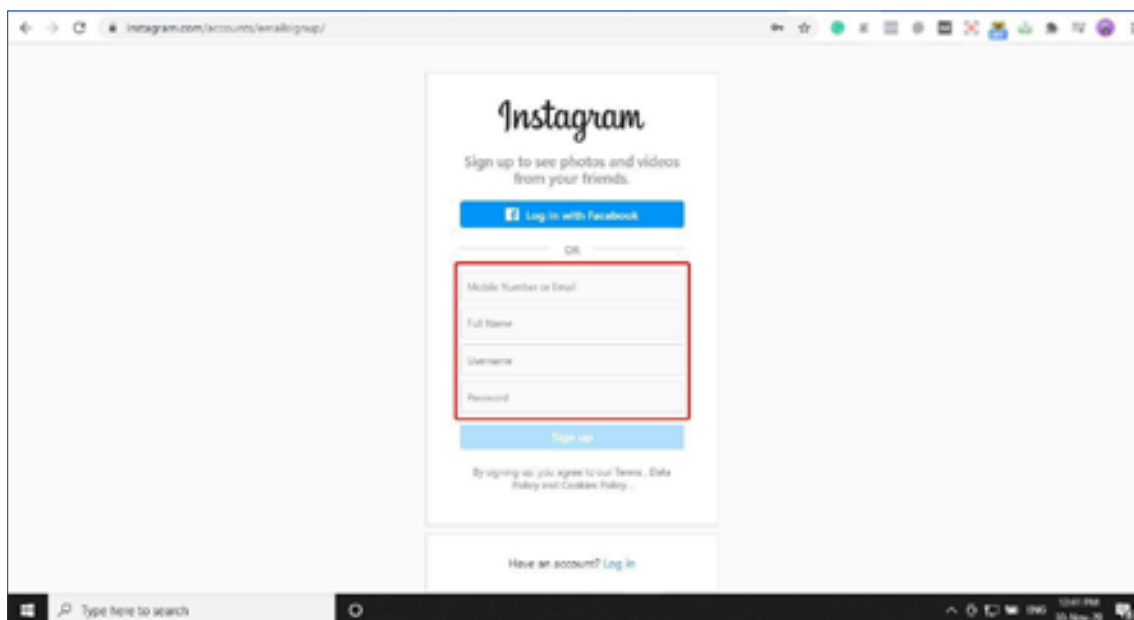
Step 4. If you register with your email or phone number, create a username and password, fill out your profile info and then tap **Next**. If you register with Facebook, you'll be prompted to log into your Facebook account if you're currently logged out.

### To create an Instagram account from a computer:

Step 1. Go to [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com).



Step 2. Click **Sign up**, enter your email address, create a username and password, or click **Login with Facebook** to sign up with your Facebook account.



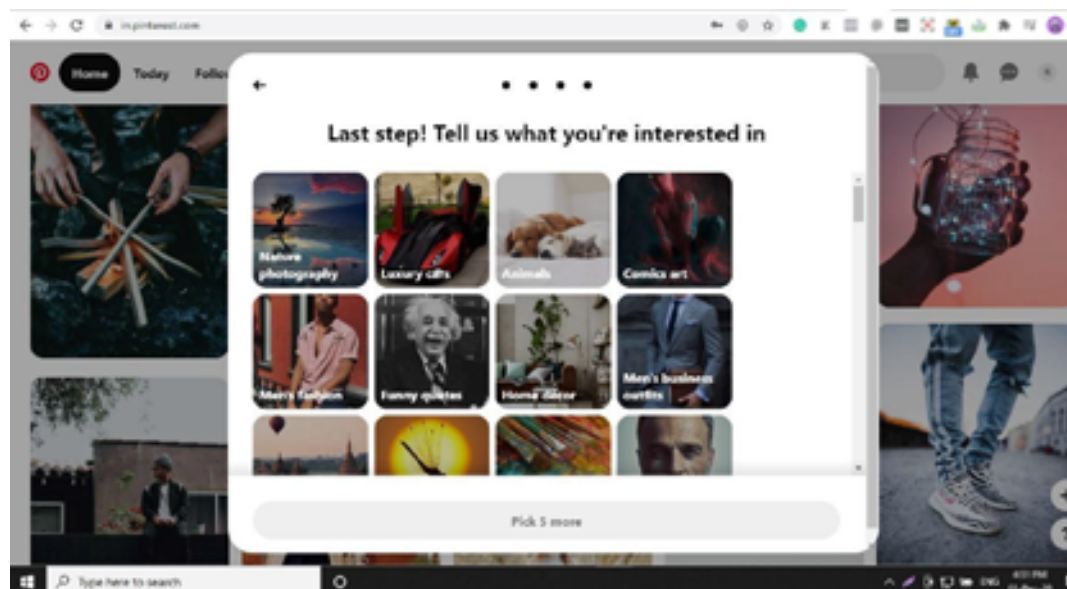
Step 3. If you register with an email, click **Sign up**. If you register with Facebook, you'll be prompted to log into your Facebook account if you're currently logged out.

If you sign up with an email, make sure you enter your email address correctly and choose an email address that only you can access. If you log out and forget your password, you'll need to be able to access your email to get back into your Instagram account.

- **Creating a Pinterest Account:**



Step 1. Choose Your Topics of Interest. Once you've signed in using Twitter or Facebook, you'll be presented with a visual grid of 28 topics.



Step 2. **Create** Boards.

Step 3. Install the "Pin It" Button and Start Pinning.

Step 4. Get Social.

- **Creating an Account on LinkedIn:**

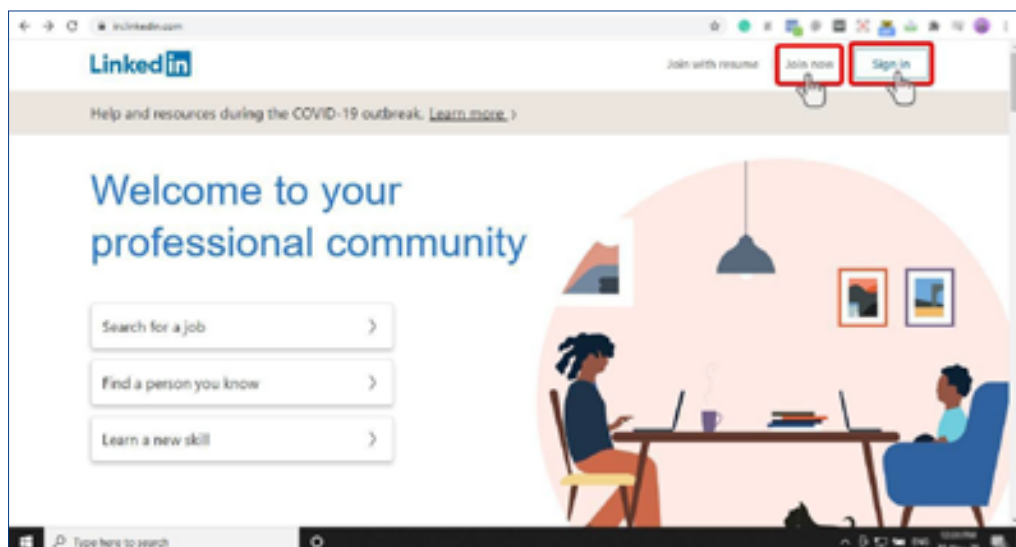


### Signing up to Join LinkedIn

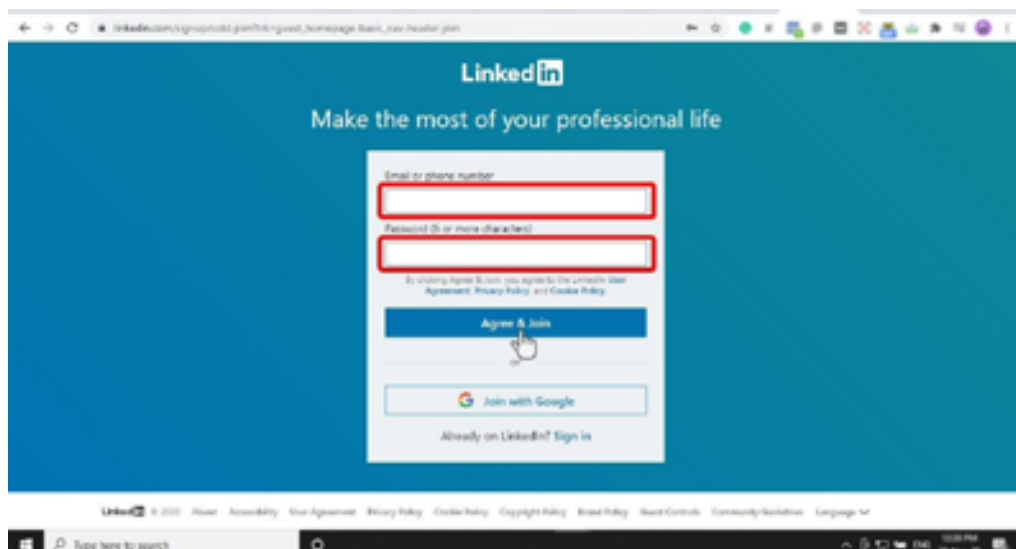
LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with hundreds of millions of members, and it is growing rapidly. Their mission is to connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful.

### To join LinkedIn and create your profile:

Step 1. Navigate to the **LinkedIn sign up page**. Using the link <https://in.linkedin.com/> and click on the "Join Now" or "Sign in" button.

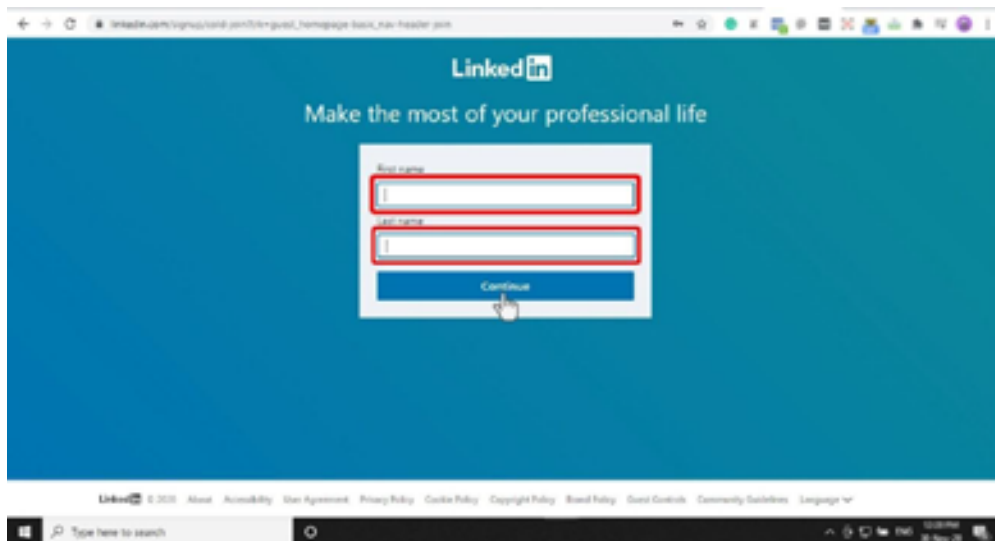


Step 2: Type your email address, and a password and click on "Agree & Join" button



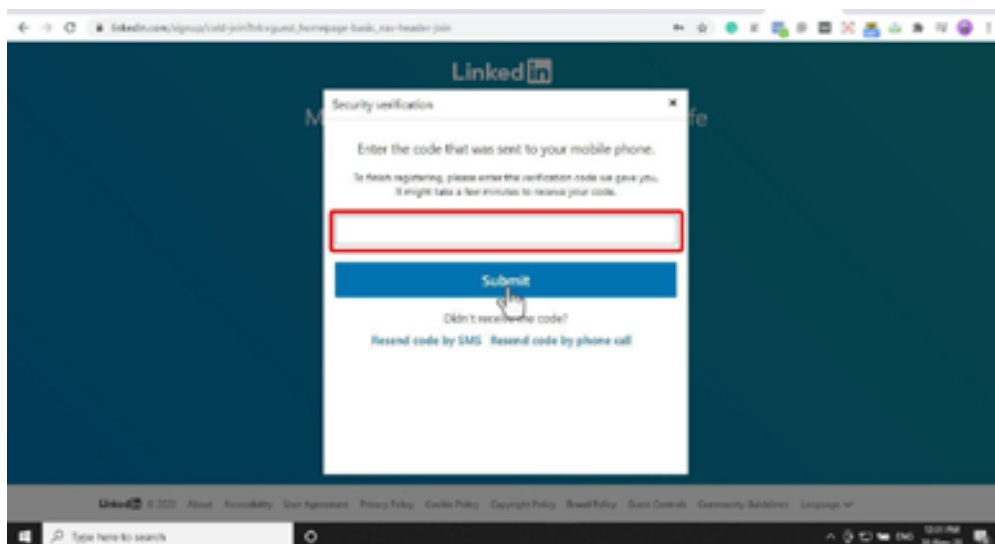
Step 3: Type your first and last name and click on “Continue”.

**Note:** You must **use your real name** when creating a profile. Company names and pseudonyms are not allowed, as explained in the **User Agreement**.



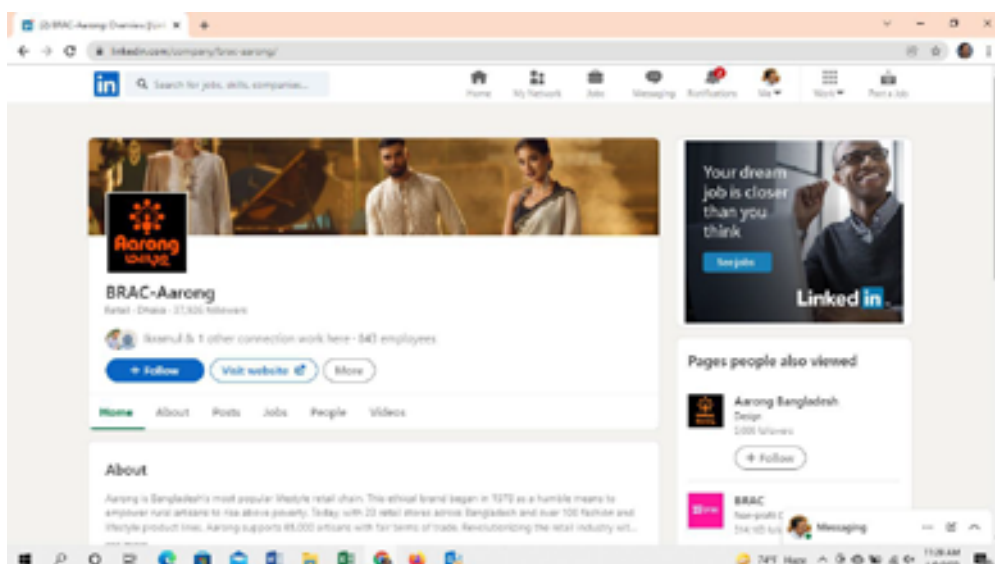
The screenshot shows the LinkedIn sign-up page with the heading "Make the most of your professional life". Below the heading, there are two input fields for "First name" and "Last name", both highlighted with red rectangles. A blue "Continue" button is positioned below the input fields. The page footer includes links for "About", "Accessibility", "User Agreement", "Privacy Policy", "Cookie Policy", "Copyright Policy", "Brand Policy", "Guest Controls", "Community Guidelines", and "Language".

Step 4. Enter the verification code sent to your mobile number or email address for verification then click on the “Continue” button.



The screenshot shows the LinkedIn security verification page. A white modal box is centered on the screen with the heading "Security verification". Inside the modal, it says "Enter the code that was sent to your mobile phone." and "To finish registering, please enter the verification code we gave you. It might take a few minutes to receive your code." Below this text is a red-outlined input field for the verification code. A blue "Submit" button is below the input field. At the bottom of the modal, there are links for "Didn't receive the code?", "Resend code by SMS", and "Resend code by phone call". The background of the page is dark blue with the LinkedIn logo at the top.

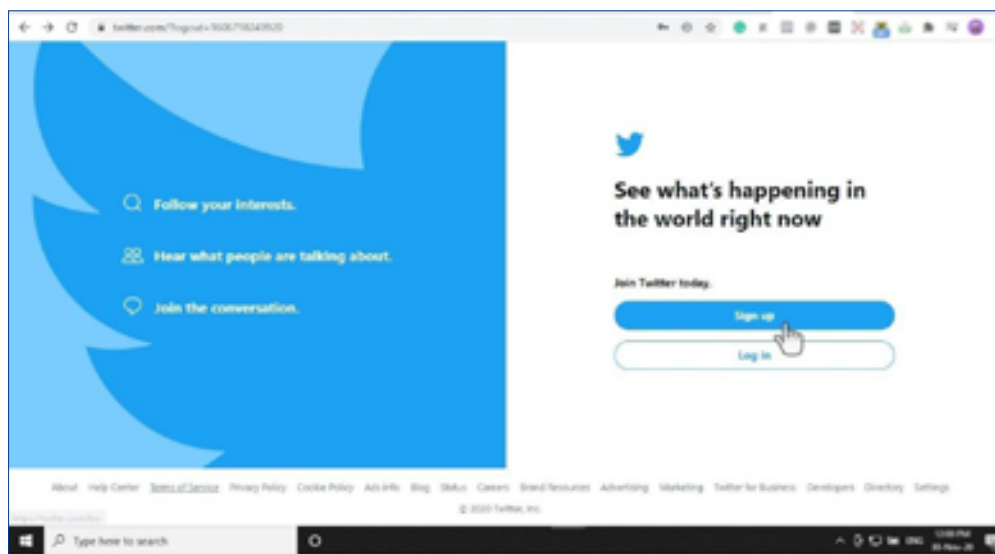
Step 5: Your LinkedIn account is created.



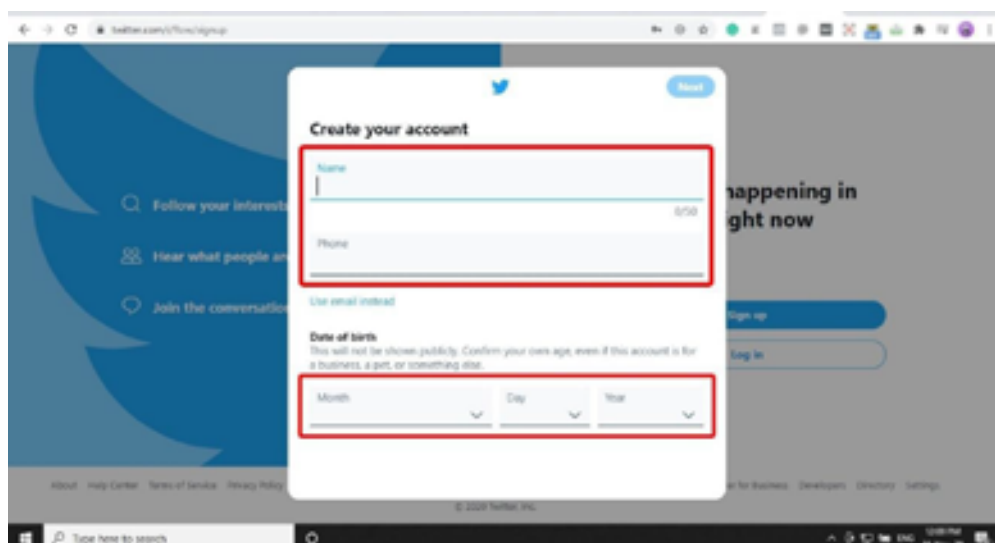
- **Creating a Twitter Account:**



Step 1: Go to <http://twitter.com> and find the signup box, or go directly to <https://twitter.com/signup>.

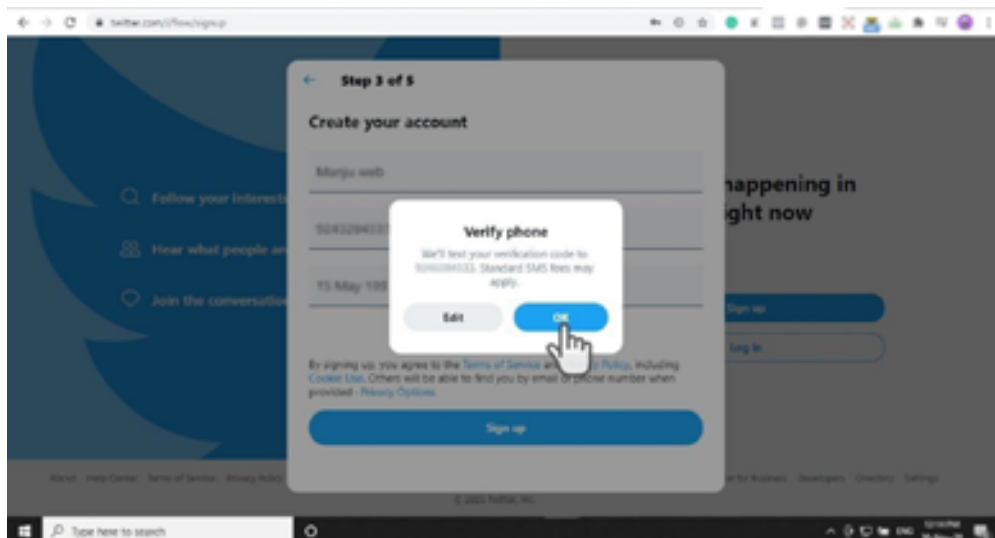


Step 2: You will be guided through the Sign-up process and prompted to enter information such as your name and phone number and select your month, day and year of birth. Then click on the "Next" button.

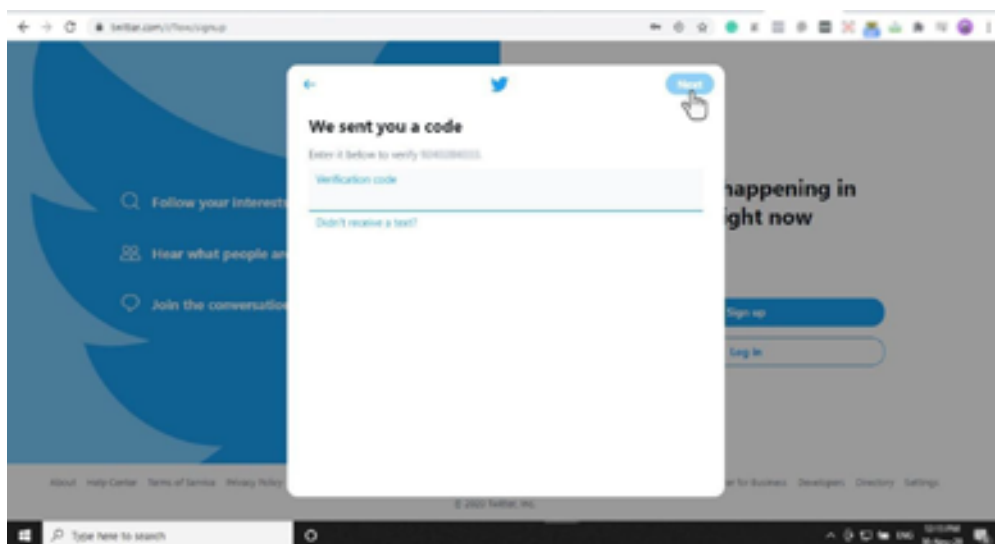


Step 3: Check if the mobile number you have provided is correct then click on the "Ok" button, or else "Edit".

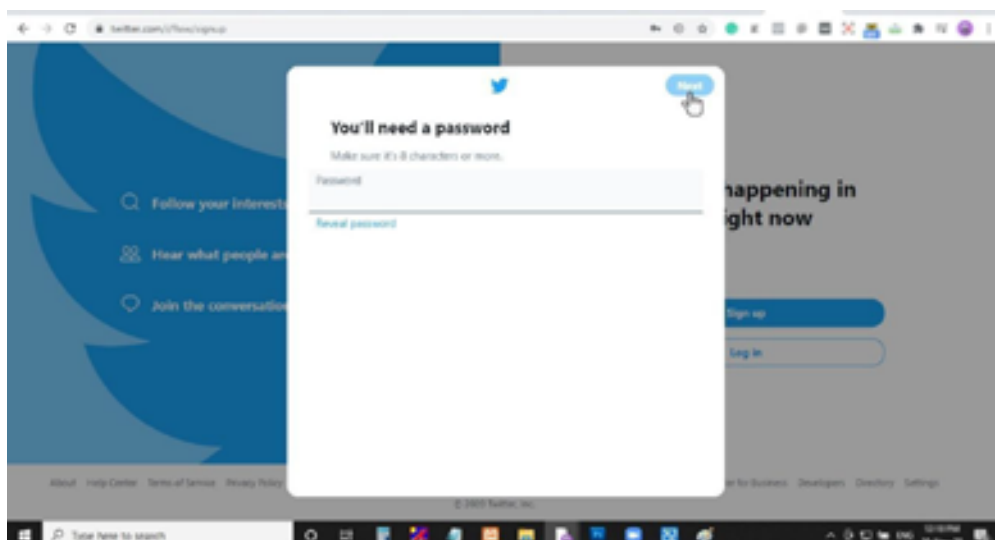




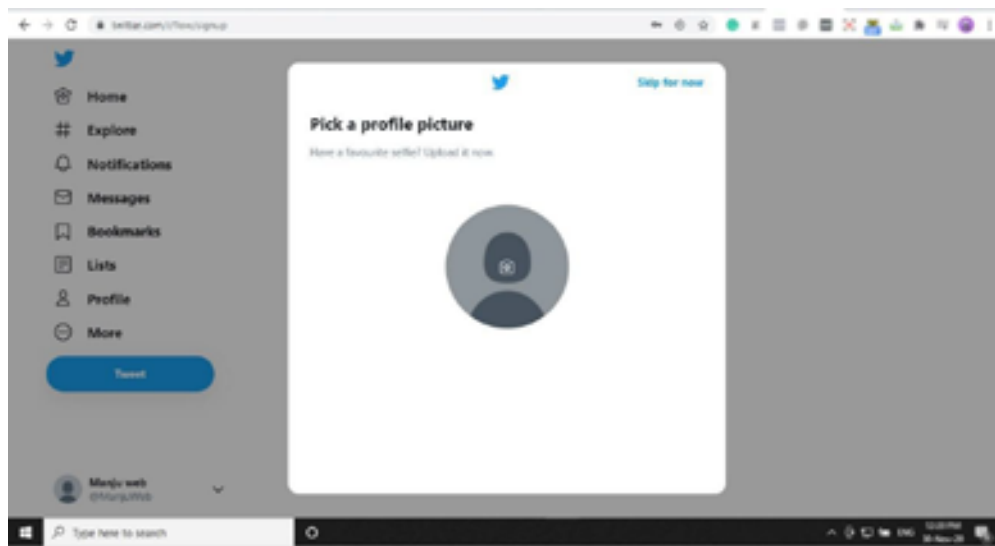
Step 4: If you choose to sign up with a phone number, your phone number will be verified through a code sent via an SMS text message. You may also request a voice call to verify your phone number. Enter the verification code in the box provided. And click on the "Next" button.



Step 5: Enter the password and then click on the "Next" button.



Step 6: Select a profile picture for your account.



Step 7: Once you sign up for an account, you can select a username (usernames are unique identifiers on Twitter).

## 1.4 Necessary Things to Kick-start an Online Business

### 1.4.1 What is required to start an e-commerce business:

#### Start with your company/ firm name

Once you define your products and services, the first thing that needs to be done is choosing a unique and memorable name for your company or firm. You can conduct a corporate name search to make sure that the business name is not a copied one. After you have chosen the name, you have to register it.

#### Create your e-mail account

You can create e-mail account for free on platforms like Gmail or Yahoo, but it is always professional to have your business e-mail at your own domainname.com. G Suite provides the best business mail option. Registration of domain names is mandatory.

#### Secure your domain name and website

You will get your business name as the domain name, and if it's not available, you can choose a URL that will be easy to say and spell and related to your business. You can also try a different domain name extension. Suppose your business name is Karen's Craft Creations and KarensCraftCreations.com is not available, then you can try something like CraftsbyKaren.com etc.

You want to ensure that your e-commerce site is not only attractive but also functional. There are some amazing commerce solutions like Razorpay or Shopify, but you should customize your site according to your business needs.

#### Choose the best business structure and register your business

There are many options to choose from when it comes to structuring your business, including:

- Sole Proprietorship
- Partnership Firm (if you have a business partner)
- LLC /LLP
- Corporation/Joint stock companies registered under the Companies Act (in India)
- You can choose the form of organization most suited for your business. If it is not structured as a corporation or LLC, it will be considered as a sole proprietary unit or partnership firm, depending on the case. The necessary registration procedures according to national law need to be followed.

### **Open a business bank account**

Once you have successfully completed the registration formalities of your business, you need to apply for and open a bank account in the name of your business.

### **Apply for business licenses and permits**

You need certain business licenses and permits to operate your e-commerce business. You have to check with your city, country, and state to see what kind of sales tax licenses or home business licenses you require and get those in place before you start your business.

### **Find the right vendors**

You will encounter a lot of competition while selling products online. Hence, to be best in the domain you need to get the best quality and best prices for the products you sell. For those who are having their own manufacturing too, sourcing raw material will be key. Shop around until you find a trustworthy vendor with the most competitive prices that do not compromise quality to do business with on a long-term basis.

### **Start marketing early**

Setting up social media profiles and writing content for your blog is always a great idea even if your business is not yet set up. You can put a "Coming Soon" page on your website, and use a tool like LaunchRock to allow interested users to sign up for updates. LaunchRock is one of the best online platforms that enables its users to create popular "Launching Soon" pages.

### **Get more benefits with the right software**

Technology makes your work easier. So, before starting your e-commerce business, you should make yourself aware of the software that deal with customer relationship management, accounting, project management, and e-mail marketing. You can integrate them into your business once you launch.

### **Stock your inventory**

Make sure you have enough inventory stock before launching. It is tricky because we do not know how much we need, but in general, it will be better if we stock adequate inventory. You have to monitor how your sales increase so as to adequately plan for future orders.

### **Make sure your business stays compliant**

Once your e-commerce business has been launched, things will move very fast. The filing of your annual report should not be overlooked if you have incorporated or filed an LLC nor

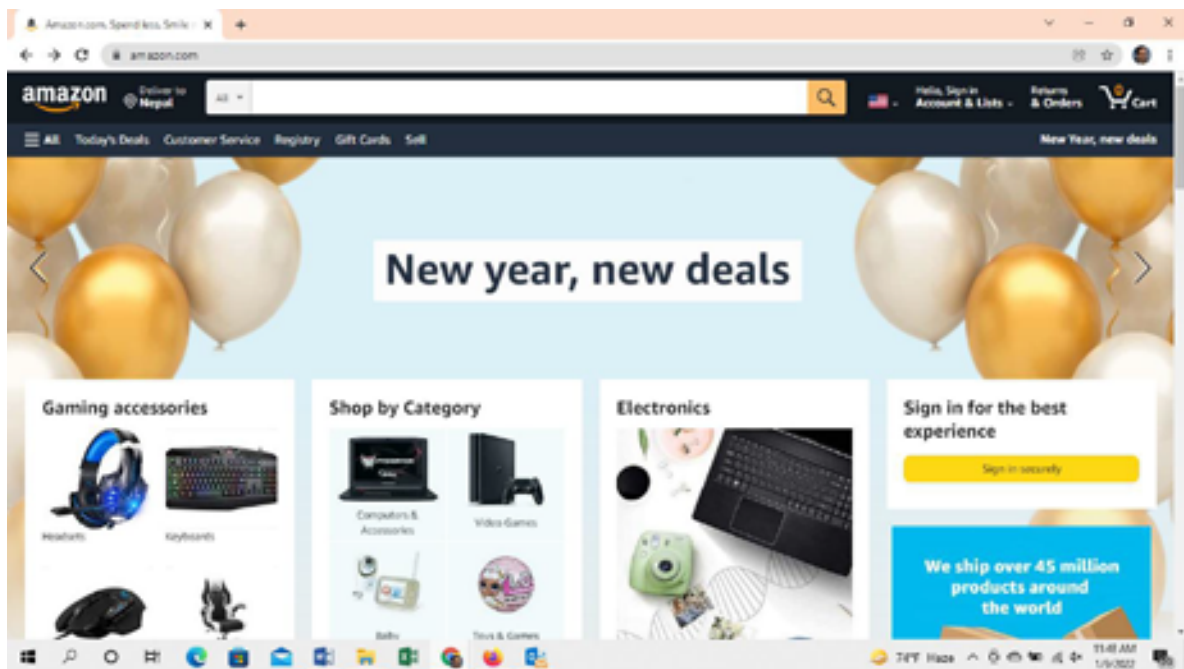
the annual fees for business permits. You can put these deadlines on the calendar to set reminders.

### 1.4.2 Existing marketplaces to start a business online:

To start up an online business, initially it is important that you register and start with the most established e-marketplaces, as there are many customers who visit. However, the seller fees, commissions, and the documentation required for each marketplace differ; hence it is important to weigh the options carefully.

Four of the top marketplaces to consider registering are provided below. In addition, it is also important that you also register to the marketplaces available in your country.

- **Amazon**



The biggest advantage of selling products on Amazon is that you can get access to the marketplace giant's 100 million Prime members. The yearly amount spent by a customer on Amazon is around \$1,400. That makes Amazon the top marketplace for brands and retailers.

Making your products available to Prime members is key. Once you start selling on Amazon, then the most important thing will be choosing a selling plan which best fits your business.

For those who prefer to get started immediately, Amazon's individual selling plan is sufficient.

#### How to sell on Amazon:

1. Register to create a seller account on Amazon.
2. Upload your product listings.
3. Customers will check out your products on Amazon and buy them.
4. Deliver the products to the customer.
5. Receive your payment.

- **eBay**

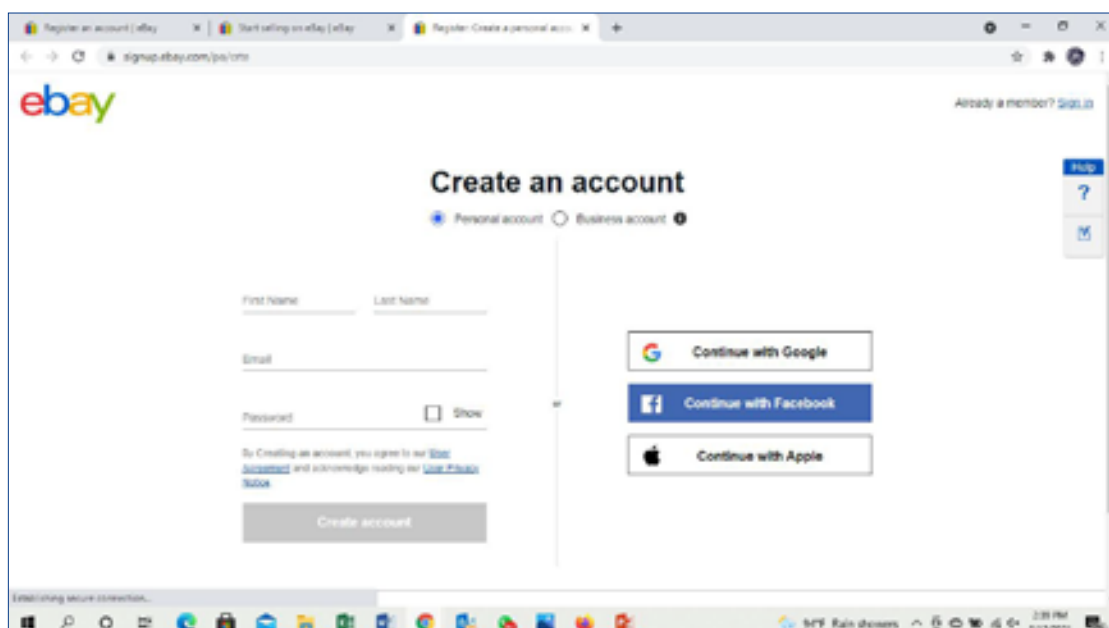
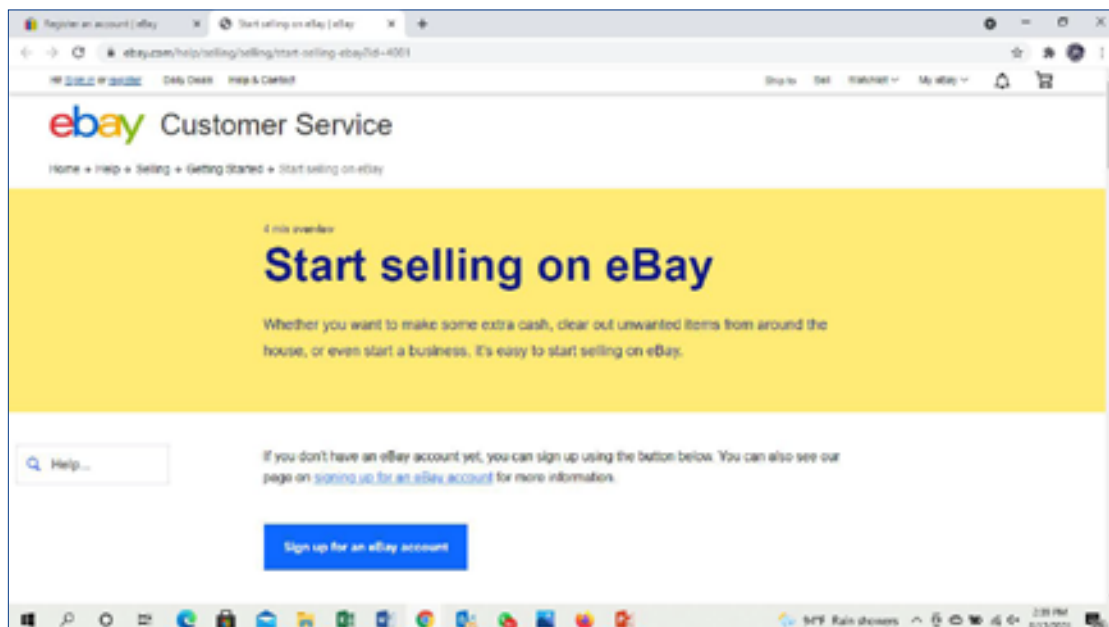
eBay is another shopping site with a vast global market share and consumer base that can be tapped into by vendors. eBay can offer around 182 million users who are present worldwide.

**While selling on eBay, there are two primary types of selling fees:**

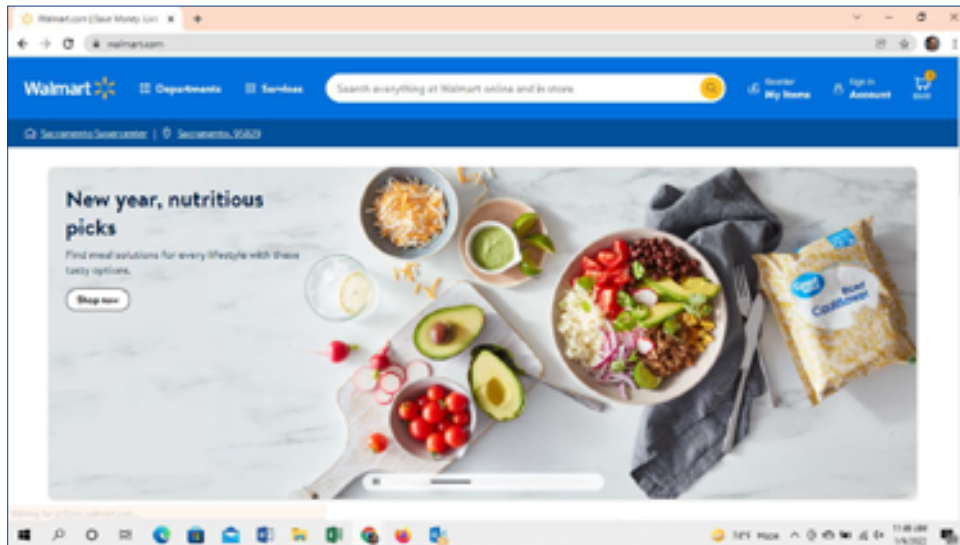
1. Insertion fee is applied when the seller creates a listing.
2. A final value fee is applied when the sale happens.

**How to sell on eBay:**

1. List the products on eBay.
2. Learn how to pack your item, print your label, and ship with ease using the eBay site.
3. After this, earn cash.



- **Walmart**



Walmart does not charge for initial setup, monthly or annual fees – it only charges commission fees. Walmart is an invite-only marketplace, which means you will have a little more lead time to launch.

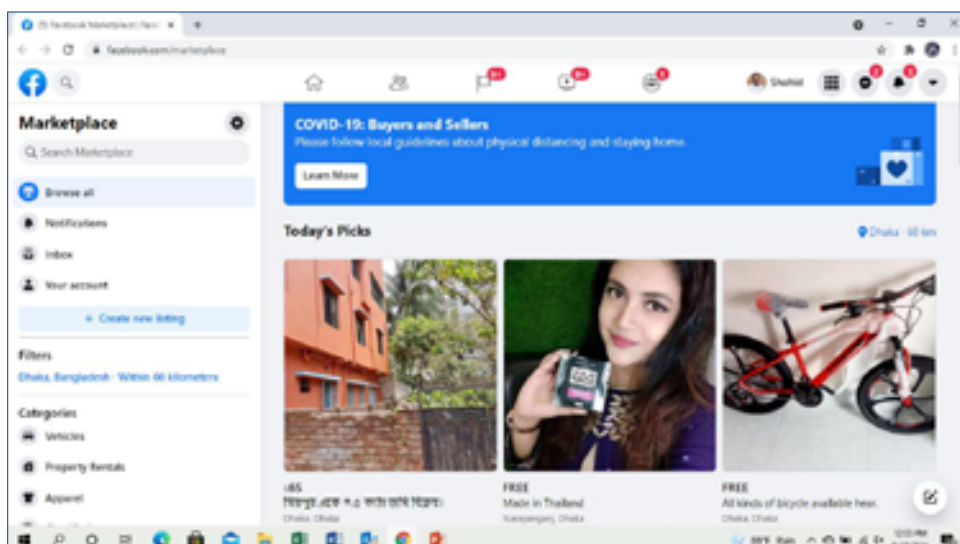
#### How to sell on Walmart:

To sell on Walmart, you have to follow these five steps:

1. Sellers should apply to start selling on Walmart.
2. You have to set up your Walmart Seller Account.
3. List your Products.
4. You have to test the Product Feed & Order Management Functions.
5. Finally, you have to Request Launch & Start Selling.

- **Facebook Marketplace**

Facebook Marketplace is another marketplace for online marketing. Facebook Marketplace is an attractive marketplace for both new and established sellers, and it has no listing fees or commissions.



Selling on Facebook Marketplace is an easy task, and it is different for merchants and individuals. Facebook will review your products and deem them suitable or otherwise to sell on the marketplace in a weeks' time or so.

#### **How to sell on Facebook Marketplace:**

**Step 1: Click the Marketplace icon, and then select the 'Sell' or 'Sell Something' button.** Choose the type of item, then take a picture of the item and press the 'Add Photos' option to upload them.

**Step 2: Enter an item title, description, and price.** Like you do, when selling via a group, include all the product details and impressive images to attract the buyer. Then set a price.

**Step 3: Confirm your location.** Facebook will give only a rough location and will not disclose the exact address.

**Step 4: Select a category of items.** Buyers can filter listings using this.

### **1.4.3 Precautions for every e-commerce business**

E-commerce has become the backbone of retail business in today's world. Without e-commerce, retail businesses cannot scale up rapidly. Operating a business in the digital era requires regular and attentive engagement with consumers in the online sphere. But before you launch an e-commerce website, there are a few important precautions you need to be aware of:

#### **Test all key items**

You must test all key things related to e-commerce before you launch a website. There is always room for further improvement and enhancement. You might come across two kinds of problems after the launch of your website, some critical and some non-critical. For instance, an incident which involves a customer not being able to place an online order can be termed as a critical incident.

#### **Start on a smaller scale**

If you are planning to launch an e-commerce website, you should start on a small scale to ensure manageability. You can first launch with a focused, small catalogue about your products, and then monitor the process to ensure that everything is working smoothly without any issues.

#### **Make sure that customers can find you on the internet**

In order for customers to find information about your company details through search engines, you will need to ensure that your entire website's search engine optimization is done. This can be product content; the homepage; and all other content pages. Your website should be crawlable (search engine spiders can discover links to and within your website easily) and indexable (people can find the web pages through search engines). You should mark your presence on location-based services such as Google Maps.

#### **Secure Website**

For an e-commerce business, having a secure website is a must. If there are attacks by hackers, and your customer's data gets leaked, you will lose the customer's trust. So you need to work on securing your website. The use of SSL and SiteLock ([www.sitelock.com](http://www.sitelock.com)) – the global leaders in website security protection – offer some of the best solutions.



### **Ensure that customers return to your site**

Once your website is up and begins to drive traffic, you must work to ensure that customers keep coming back. Many times customers reach the website initially only to make inquiries and then make a purchase later on. You should connect with all your prospective customers. You should use the best Customer Relationship Management software and consider hiring a customer service manager to connect you with your customers through regular emails and social media channels.

### **Streamline your fulfillment cycle**

Customer service and the fulfillment of orders are fundamental to retain customers. You always need to ensure the right stock levels and handle aspects like returns and exchanges, order tracking and status display and shipping proficiently.

### **Make sure that your decisions are supported by data**

When you make a decision that is going to have an impact on the bottom line, you will need to make decisions supported by solid data on buyers and visitors. Google Analytics (discussed earlier in Section 1.3) provides important data.

Even email marketing has A/B testing so that you can get things right. You can also glean data using SEM, CRM affiliate marketing, and other tools.

Further aspects for e-commerce businesses to consider on a regular basis to remain viable and grow further are identified below.

### **Identifying the right e-Commerce website**

Is it possible to sell all kinds of products from any type of shop? You need to know the right kind of e-commerce stores or websites for your products. What happens if you choose a website that doesn't match your product range? Choosing the right e-commerce site is extremely important for effective business from Day One. Otherwise, you will not be able to get going and face inventory challenges. For example, groceries may not be the right choice of product for an e-commerce site meant exclusively for toys and gifts. Subsequently listing groceries on this site would likely result in no sales, unsold stock, and wasted inventory investment.

### **How can you identify the right website for your products?**

- First, choose the products you would like to sell. With the development of e-commerce globally now we have e-commerce sites specializing in certain types of products/sectors as well.
- Search for an e-commerce website that sells similar products or deals with the same product range or similar sector that you have.
- Check the average price range of the products selling on the chosen website. Once a choice of website is done the entrepreneurs have to carefully check the prices of their products with the similar ones already being sold on the same site. The price has to be competitive.
- Find out the target market of the e-commerce website. Ensure that the product matches their market's requirement. The entrepreneur also has to study the right kind of target customers for the website being used.

# Module 2.

## Exploring the e-commerce portal *wesellonline.org*



## Module 2: Exploring the e-commerce portal *wesellonline.org*

The *wesellonline.org* web portal has been referred to only as a learning platform to understand and learn the process and operation of e-commerce. Entrepreneurs can use the lessons taught in this module to build their respective e-commerce portals/ platforms.

**Aim:** This module will help in learning how to handle and operate the e-commerce portal designed to suit the needs of the women entrepreneurs and how can they create personalized vendor accounts for them.

### 2.1 Selling Online

The most wonderful aspect of e-commerce is its ability to make an immediate impact on sales and marketing efforts. By going online, a neighborhood flower shop or a home-based consultant expands their operations to a national, or even international, base of targeted customers. There are no boundaries for an e-commerce business. Small business owners who start their businesses online receive payments faster due to various payment gateways, which are increasing in number daily as a result of calamities like COVID-19. It is easier to conduct business. Following are some of the features that most modern e-commerce websites have:

- User-friendly and mobile-friendly design
- Easy website navigation features
- Good quality content, i.e. product description/images
- High-resolution photos and videos
- Multiple online payment options for buyers
- Product reviews/ testimonials
- Security features (SSL, etc.)
- A well-presented contact page
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Privacy policy and return policy

**Wesellonline.org** is a learning platform that offers lead (enquiry) generation to all enterprising women. Women run micro, small and medium enterprises in South Asia can showcase their artwork, products or services on the platform, which creates a common forum for women to expand their marketing opportunities.

### 2.1.1 Three Main Parts: Customer, Entrepreneur, Admin

The website [wesellonline.org](http://wesellonline.org) has been broadly categorized into three sections:

- **Customer**

The steps required to make purchases, from the buyers' perspective, are stated below:

- Before a customer can place an order for the products, he/she has to create an account by providing his/her personal details (name, valid email ID, password, and contact number).
- After creating an account, the customer has to sign in. Once he/she signs in, he/she will be able to access different product categories.
- Products are listed category-wise. Users select the product(s) to add to a cart and then proceed to make the order.
- Once the order is placed, the entrepreneur will receive a notification via e-mail or SMS.
- The entrepreneur will communicate with the customer directly based on the enquiry generated in the portal.

A virtual training platform for women entrepreneurs of South Asia developed under the project implemented by UNESCAP and EIF

**Wesellonline.org**

Search products

ESCAP EIF

Enquiry Cart

Home Product Categories Knowledge Bank Entrepreneurs Contact Us Login

**Already Have a Customer Account? Login**

Email ID

Login Email ID\*

Password

Password\*

Submit

[Forgot your password?](#)

**Customer Account Creation Page**

### Customer Account Creation Page

- **Entrepreneur**

In order to create an entrepreneur account on [www.wesellonline.org](http://www.wesellonline.org), the following steps are to be followed:

- Open up your preferred internet browser. Enter [wesellonline.org](http://wesellonline.org) in the browser address bar.
- Click on the **"Entrepreneur"** button. You will be redirected to the **Sign In** page.
- To proceed, first, you have to create an account. Enter your details as given below:
  - Your First Name, Middle Name (optional) and Last Name
  - Select the Gender (Only women entrepreneurs are eligible to sell online on this portal)
  - Enter a valid e-mail address
  - Choose a password for your account (your password must be strong and it should include capital & small alphabets, digits and special symbols)
  - Re-enter the same password again
  - Enter your Mobile Number and select appropriate Country Code
  - Enter your Office / Company /Business Contact Number
  - Enter your Home Contact Number
  - Enter your Full Address
  - Enter the Name of your City
  - Enter the ZIP Code of your Location
  - Select your Country
  - Select Your Business Type
  - Choose the Product/Service Category

- Select your Currency
- Taxation Number
- Tax Registration Details
- Taxation Proof Document (jpg/ png/ pdf format)
- Identity Proof Document (jpg/ png/ pdf format)
- Address Proof Document (jpg/ png/ pdf format)
- Profile Picture (jpg/ png format)
- Personal Profile Details (not to exceed 100 words)
- Provide your Firm/ Company Name (alphanumeric text)
- Your Business Profile Details
- Your Current Turnover (in your selected currency in the currency field)
- You need to accept the terms and conditions to submit your account creation form

As an entrepreneur you can sell your products/services online by following the process below:

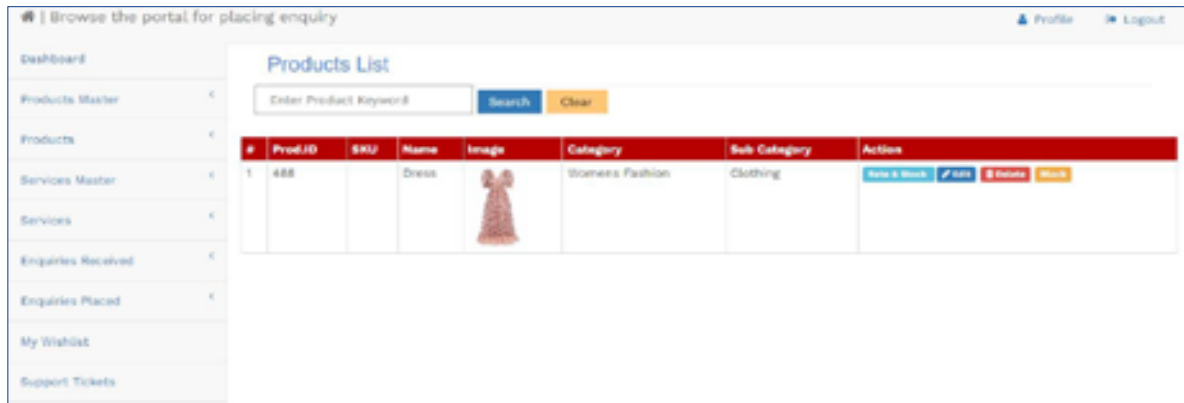
- As an entrepreneur, first you have to create an account on [wesellonline.org](http://wesellonline.org).

The screenshot shows two side-by-side forms on the wesellonline.org website. The left form is titled 'Create Entrepreneur Account' and includes a note: '(Note: Fields marked with \* are compulsory)'. It has input fields for 'First Name \*', 'Middle Name', 'Last Name \*', 'Email ID \* (double check for the spellings)', and 'Re-enter Password \*'. There are also radio buttons for 'Gender' (Male and Female) and a 'Submit' button. The right form is titled 'Entrepreneur Login' and has input fields for 'Login Email ID' and a password field (indicated by asterisks). It also has a 'Submit' button and a link for 'Forgot Password?'.

- The Administrator will verify your account registration details, including e-mail address, country, and phone number. Once the Admin approves the account, you will be able to login and add products with product details such as product specifications, price, images, etc.



- After publishing the products, they appear on the customer portal. You will also be able to access features such as:
  - Product Management
  - Order Management
  - Order History

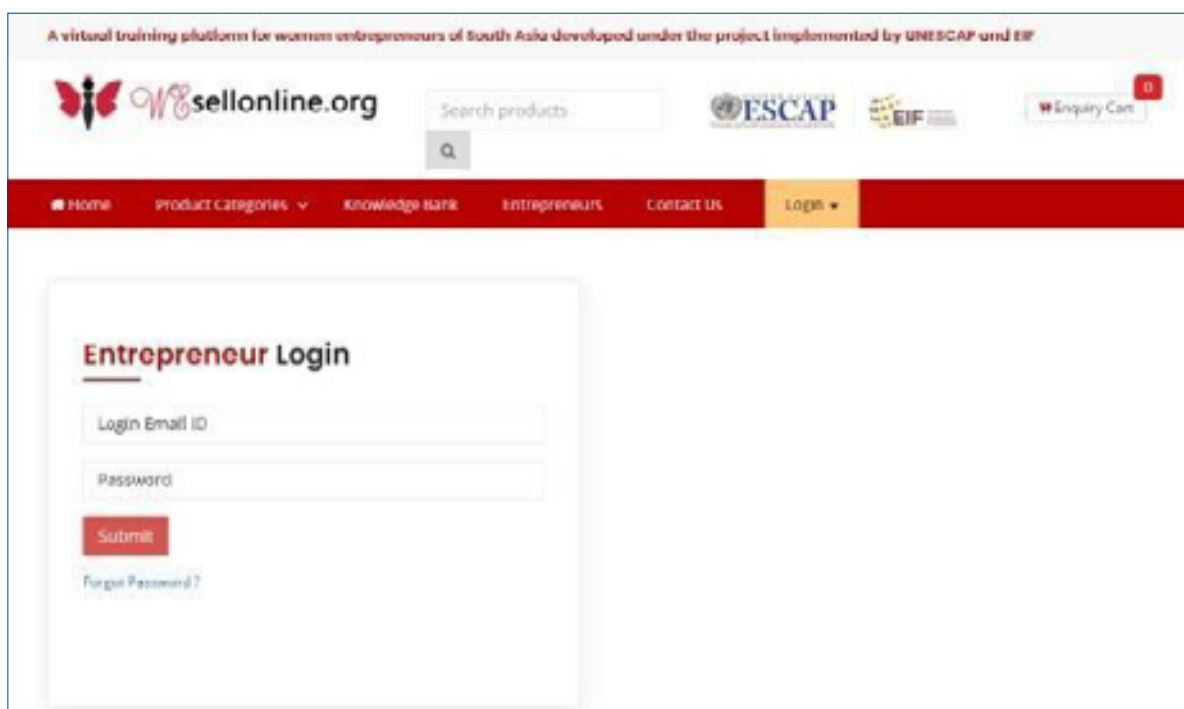


## • Admin

The Admin can access and manage the following aspects of the site:

- Verify customer/entrepreneur registrations on the portal.
- Create/manage product categories & sub-categories
- Check the product uploads and product data entry
- Conduct Search Engine Optimization administration
- Define and manage tax rates, shipping/ delivery rules, and pick up options
- Collect payments, install applications as part of the website components, ensure fulfillment and troubleshooting for technical issues both on and off the website portal

Click on the “**Entrepreneur**” button. You will be redirected to the **Sign In** page





## Create Customer Account

(Note: Fields marked with \* are compulsory)

First Name \*

Middle Name

Last Name \*

Gender \*

Age \*

Mobile No. \*

Address

Place \*

Zipcode \*

Country \*

Your Business Type

Email ID (This will be your login ID) \*

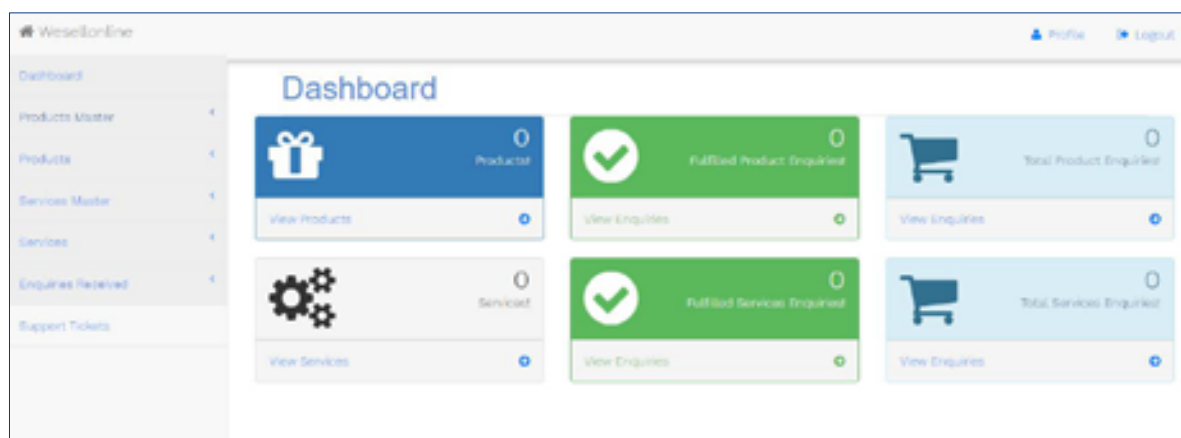
Password \*

Re-enter Password \*

☐ I accept Terms and Conditions

Submit

### Entrepreneur Registration Page



### Login with your ID and View the Dashboard

#### 2.1.2 How to upload your company profile in the entrepreneur dashboard

You have to enter your firm/company/business details in the fields provided on the registration page (as given in the picture)

- Registration Category
- Product/Service Category (area of business interest)
- Taxation ID (numeric or alphanumeric ID/number based on your local governance)

- Brief Tax Registration Details (up to 100 words)
- Upload a supporting document for Tax Registration
- Your Firm Name and
- Brief Firm Profile

**Your Story :**

**Google Map** ➡ Update Map Address

**Firm / Company Details** ➡ Update

Name :

Business/Company Profile :

Website :

Support Email :

Contact No :

Address :

Place :

Zipcode :

Country :

Current Turnover :

**Meta Details** ➡ Update

Title :

Meta Keywords :

Meta Description :

### 2.1.3 How to update your company and product profiles from time to time in the seller dashboard

Sign-in to your seller's account to update your company profile or product profiles.

- Updating your company profile – After signing in, click on the **Profile** button available on the top-right corner. You shall see your account details listed. Find **Firm / Company Details** title, click on the **"Update"** button available beside the title. Edit the details and click on **"Update"**.
- Updating your product profile – You may edit your product details such as general product attributes, price and size details, search engine keywords in the **Products** section of the sidebar menu. The details can be added in the subsequent sections.

### 2.1.4 How to add a new product

- Sign in into the system, then you'll see the dashboard.
- Click on the **Products** option and a new window will appear for adding products.

- Select the necessary fields and categories before uploading your products.
- The feature can also be customized in a variety of ways. For example, under **General**, you can add the size and price, upload images from the image option from the header bar, and finally specify and tag the product directly from the system.

Wesellonline

Dashboard

Products Master <

Products >

Add Product

Add Products in Bulk

View Products <

Services Master <

Services <

Enquiries Received <

Support Tickets

### Add New Product

General Size & Price Images Specification Product Tag

(Fields marked with \* are compulsory)

Product Name \*

SKU

Model

- Select Brand -

(To add brand, navigate to Master -> Brand)

- Select Main Category \* -

- Select Sub Category\* -

- Select Third Category -

Note: If you can't find the right category, choose the category Others (sub category as Others). You may suggest your category to [info@wesellonline.org](mailto:info@wesellonline.org)

☐ Custom Template

### 2.1.5 Registering Bank Details:

You are required to provide your bank account details to get paid for the successful orders executed. The details required are as below:

- Name of the account holder (full name)
- The bank account number or International Bank Account Number (IBAN)
- Name of the bank branch and its address
- Branch Code or the IFSC/ SWIFT Code

# Module 3 .

**Product catalogue,  
image optimization, inventory  
management options in  
*wesellonline.org***



## Module 3: Product catalogue, image optimization, inventory management options in [wesellonline.org](https://wesellonline.org)

**Aim: 1. To equip the trainees to apply the right method to refurbish or update the merchandise, product or service for optimal utilization.**

**2. Draw prospects or leads for the business.**

### 3.1 Product Catalogue

#### 3.1.1 Writing the product description

A good product description provides customers with information about the features and value of your product, so that they are tempted to buy it. Consider: what benefit does each of these features provide to the customer? How is your product going to make your customers feel happy, healthy, or productive? What needs of the customer is your product going to serve, and which problems or hassle does your product help solve? Imagine that the customer is now on your product's page, looking for the perfect product that fits his/her needs.

Your target is to convince the customer to click the "Add to the Cart" button. You may follow the tips below:

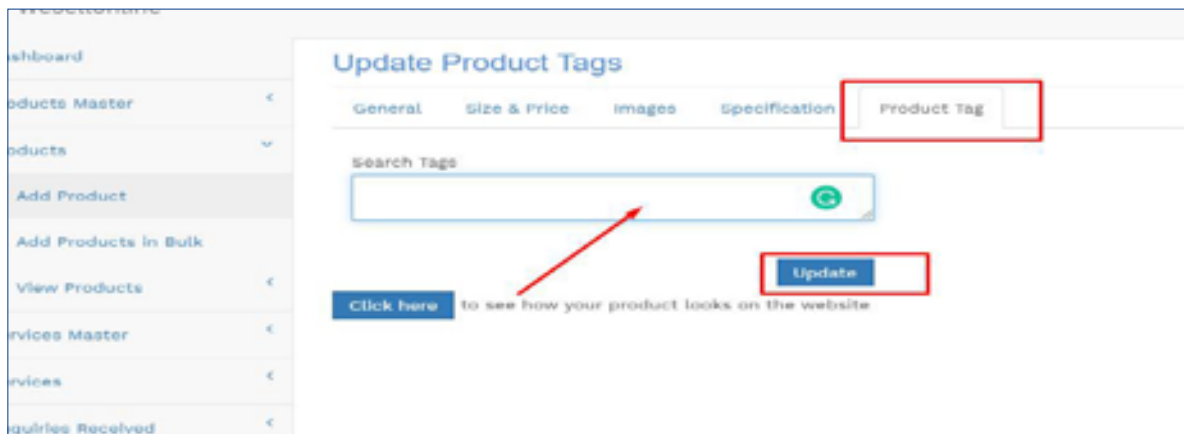
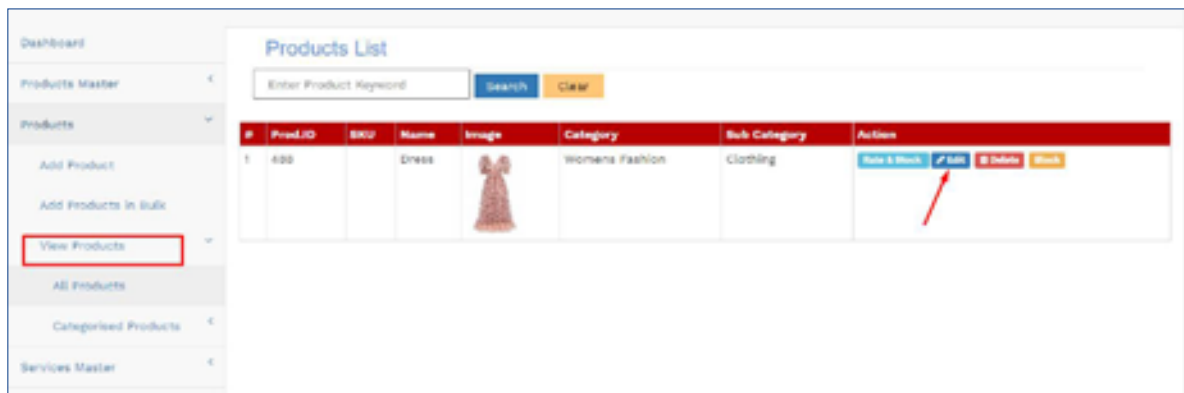
- i. Know who your target audience is
- ii. Focus on the product benefits
- iii. Tell the full story
- iv. Use natural language and tone
- v. Take it easy to scan through
- vi. Optimize the keywords in the description for search engines

#### 3.1.2 Analyzing the keywords of the product

Google considers the keywords associated with your product to determine if it is relevant to a particular search query and how your web page ranks against other pages that appear when users conduct specific word searches. Accordingly, the Google algorithm gives a web page its search ranking. This is why it is important for you to use appropriate terms/ keywords that describe your product best.

To make it easy for people to find your products, you need to know how they are looking for the products, services, or information that you offer, otherwise, they will be landing on one of the many other pages in Google results. It is worth the time you invest to ensure your keywords are relevant to your target audience.

To add keywords for your product on the wesellonline portal, you need to first sign into your entrepreneur account. Go to **View Products**, click on **Edit** the specific product. Go to the **Product Tag** tab. Here you may add keywords relating to your product so that search engines like Google will find results against searches made by site visitors for your products.



### 3.1.3 Product Photography

Product photography is a key tool to attract customers and tempt potential buyers to buy your products.

Product photography is an essential part of both offline and online advertising for websites, brochures, magazine ads, online ads, and specifically when selling products directly to your customer.

You are advised to upload product images with excellent resolution/quality. If you have a professional camera and basic photography skills, it adds significant value to your product images. Otherwise, you are advised to accept help from someone with photography skills. A good quality or resolution on the mobile phone camera today can also work for product photography, if you know how to take the picture and what angle to use.

#### Setting up your product

Ensure that you have sufficient light in the background to take good quality product images. You can use various light sources like flashes, desk lamps, strobes, or others. Anyway, natural light is the best source to get the desired results.

It's important to make sure that you set your product in front of your background on a flat, stable surface as given in the below picture.



## Cropping/ Editing /Resizing/ Enhancing Images

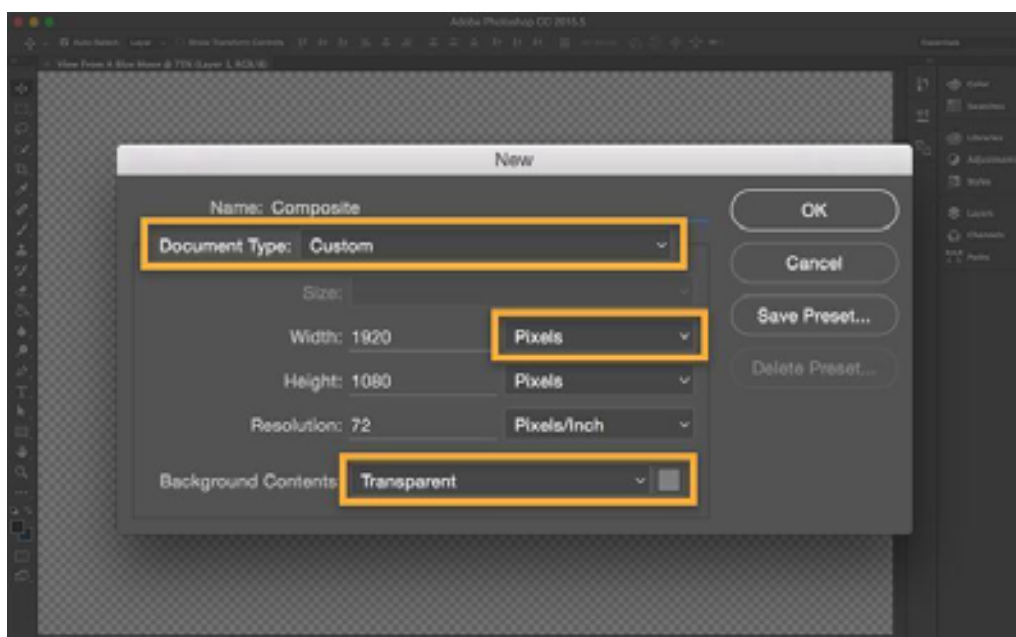
As mentioned above, you should upload product pictures with proper quality/ resolution. You may use software tools like MS Paint, Adobe Photoshop, to edit/ crop/ style/ resize/ enhance your images. The standard product image size recommended is 201 pixels (width) and 318 pixels (height).

If you have a licensed software like Adobe Photoshop you can use it. There are also free software tools available, such as Canva. Mobile phones also have a lot of handy apps that you can use, like: Inshot, Unfold, and Snapseed.



The steps for Adobe Photoshop software are given below to adjust image size as per the above recommendation:

- i. Go to the *File menu*. Click on *New*. In the **Width** field, enter 201 and in the Height field, enter 318.
- ii. Now go to the folder where your product image is located. Drag and drop it on the image content area just created in the above step.
- iii. Press and hold *Alt* and *Shift* buttons simultaneously. Move the mouse cursor over the top-left edge of the product image. Drag it to the corner of the image content area until your image fits appropriately in the content area. Press *Enter*.





- iv. Now go to the *File* menu. Click on *Save*. Enter the image name to save. Better to give a keyword as a name for the product. Choose file *Format* as *JPEG*. Click *Save*. In the next screen pop-up, under *Image Options*, select the desired image *Quality* and then click *OK* to save the changes.

### 3.1.5 Bulk Uploading of Products/ Services

If you have many products to be uploaded, then adding them one by one on the portal may be tedious work. The entrepreneur dashboard comes with a feature where you can upload all your products in one go.

All you need to do is, create a spreadsheet where all your products are listed in rows, where each row includes attributes/properties of the product, and you have to enter the attribute value in the respective column as given below:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	Product name	Brand name	SKU	Category	Sub-category	Returnable(1=yes, 0=no)	In Stock(1=yes, 0=no)	Description	Specification	Search Tags(keywords)	
2	My shirt	XYZ	ms1001	Apparel	Shirt		0	1 Shirt description	Some specification info	Mens shirts	
3	My saree	ABC	ms2005	Apparel	Sarees		1	1 About saree	Some specification info	Saree for women	
4											
5											
6											
7											

Once adding rows is done, save the spreadsheet with .csv format. Now go to your seller dashboard. Click **Add Bulk Products** inside the **Products** sidebar menu. Choose the CSV file just created above and click on the **Upload** button. Note that this step only creates product entries, and you have to add sizes/price/images of those products manually one by one in **Size & Price** and **Images** tabs.

### 3.1.6 Attributes of the Product – Name of the File, Size, Quantity, Length, Store Locator, Price

In this section, you would learn how to specify product properties/attributes on the entrepreneur dashboard on wesellonline.org. Sign in to your entrepreneur account. *Navigate to Products -> Add Product* section as given in the picture below:

To add general product attributes, go to the **General** tab and provide basic product details like-

- i. Product name (alphanumeric)
- ii. SKU (Stock Keeping Unit) (alphanumeric)
- iii. Brand under which you sell your product
- iv. Product category
- v. Sub-category
- vi. Brief description about your product
- vii. Quantity – number of items available in your stock/inventory

The screenshot shows the 'Add New Product' interface. On the left is a sidebar with navigation links: Home, Master, Products (with sub-links Add Product and View Products), Orders, and Account. The main area has tabs for General, Size & Price, Images, Specification, and Product Tag. The 'General' tab is selected, displaying input fields for Product Name, SKU, a dropdown for Brand, dropdowns for Main Category and Sub Category, checkboxes for Manage Inventory, Set Product as New from Date, Set Product as New to Date, Featured, and Custom Template, and radio buttons for In Stock and Out of Stock. A Description field is at the bottom.

To add size variants of your product and price details, go to the **Sizes & Prices** tab –

- i. Product size (if applicable, numeric or alphabetic)
- ii. Quantity in stock (number)
- iii. Product price (number)
- iv. Discount offered (number)
- v. Shipping charges (if any) (number)

Add to Bag (or Add to Cart): A way for the buyer to create a temporary list of items by adding them to the cart (a virtual container of order items), which will keep track of the items until the buyer proceeds to purchase those items.

### 3.1.7 Upload Pictures of the Products

Once you have your product's images ready, you can proceed to upload them on the portal.

The screenshot shows the 'Update Product Image Details' interface. The sidebar on the left has links for Dashboard, Products Master, Products (with sub-links Add Product, Add Products in Bulk, and View Products), and a red arrow points to 'View Products'. The main area has tabs for General, Size & Price, Images, Specification, and Product Tag. The 'Images' tab is selected, displaying a 'Size' dropdown and a 'Select Color' section with radio buttons for No Color, (No Color), Red, Yellow, and Blue.

1. Go to the **Products** menu. Then **View Products**.
2. Click on the **Edit** button and click on the **Images** tab.
3. Under the Upload **Product Image** title, click on **Choose Files**. Navigate to the folder where you have kept the image, select it. Click on the **Upload** button.



### 3.1.8 Define the Products, Services, and Pricing for Online Sales

- Product pricing plays a very important role in running a successful business. Pricing your products appropriately creates a strong foundation for augmenting the customer base for future business.
- As there is no formula-based approach that suits all types of products, one can use different strategies for pricing products:

**Target Return Pricing:** You can determine a price that yields its target rate of return on investment. This price strategy includes a goal for a profit.

**Lead Generation Model:** This strategy ensures that the visitor takes action like submitting a form or signing in and sends a request for information about product details and pricing terms from a sales representative. This strategy is the practice of engaging users actively.

**Competitive Pricing:** This pricing strategy is the practice of setting a price depending on what your competitors charge for similar products or services. It results in a very competitive price with narrow margins.

## 3.2 Image Optimization

### 3.2.1 Importance of Image Optimization

A part of website performance is a fast-loading webpage. We recommend that your product images should be optimized to reduce the loading time of the website. The images should be optimized for Search Engine Optimization. You want to have a professional e-commerce website that loads fast, brings more traffic, customers, and revenues. If you want to improve the website's loading speed, it's highly recommended to find and use image compression tools that will make your images easier to load.

Image optimization is both art and science — art because there is no one definitive answer for how best to compress an individual image, and science because there are many well developed techniques and algorithms that can significantly reduce the size of an image. Finding the optimal settings for your image requires careful analysis along many dimensions, like format capabilities, content of encoded data, quality, and pixel dimensions.

Image optimization is the process of encoding images to increase a website's performance as much as possible. It's necessary to compress them. There are some rules for proper image optimization. You need to have an appropriate file name (important for Google and Bing search bots) and use "alt" text and reduce the size of image files. If you keep these rules in mind, then images will boost traffic instead of just slowing down your website's loading speed.

### 3.2.2 Recommended size of the image

As suggested earlier, you may use software tools like MS Paint, Adobe Photoshop to crop/resize/ enhance images. The standard product image size recommended is 201 pixels (width) and 318 pixels (height). So, prepare your images to the said dimensions so that they look proper on the website and don't negatively affect the website layout.

### 3.2.3 Understanding the aspect ratio for a better resolution

The aspect ratio of an image is the proportional relationship of its width to its height, according to Shutterstock, which specializes in commercial photo inventories. You will recognize it as two numbers separated by a colon in x:y format. For example, a 6x 4-inch image has an aspect ratio of 3:2. An aspect ratio does not have units attached. Instead, it represents how large the width is in comparison to its height. This means that an image measured in centimeters will be having the same aspect ratio, even if it was measured in inches. The relationship between its width and height determines the ratio and shape, but not the image's actual size.

However, an image's aspect ratio will change depending on the medium in which it is presented. The aspect ratio of an image displayed on a computer will be different from the aspect ratio of that same image displayed on the phone.

Aspect ratios are a critical part of web content because images need to be uploaded at different aspect ratios to display optimally on different-sized screens and devices, such as a desktop computer versus a mobile phone, or on a blog versus a social media account. When you use the right aspect ratios, it ensures your images are displayed as intended without stretching or resolution loss. [16]

### 3.2.4 Uploading the relevant image

Our eyes process images more quickly than the text, and that is why our attention is immediately drawn to the graphics. The product images uploaded on your e-commerce website have the potential to make or break your sale. When shopping online, potential customers frequently face the dilemma of trying to visualize what the product looks like in real life. To motivate your customers to make the purchase, you need to provide high quality product images taken from different dimensions/ angles. Customers need to be able to see as many products as possible, since they cannot touch and examine the product in person.

Make sure your product images look consistent. Adjust product images to be of the same size. Indeed, a white background will help drive sales. Still, if you wish to make your product images look more professional, you are advised to adjust your product images in such a way that they take up nearly between 80 and 90% of the image canvas area. This ensures that even a web page with differently shaped products will have an element of consistency. [17]

There are three universally supported image formats: GIF, PNG, and JPEG. In addition to these formats, some browsers also support newer formats such as WebP and JPEG XR, which offer better overall compression and more features.

#### Do you need animation? If so, use GIFs

GIF limits the color palette to a maximum of 256 colors, which makes it a poor choice for most images. Further, PNG-8 (the newer version of PNG for animation with options to display 256 colors) delivers better compression for images with a small palette. As a result, GIFs should be used only when animation is required.

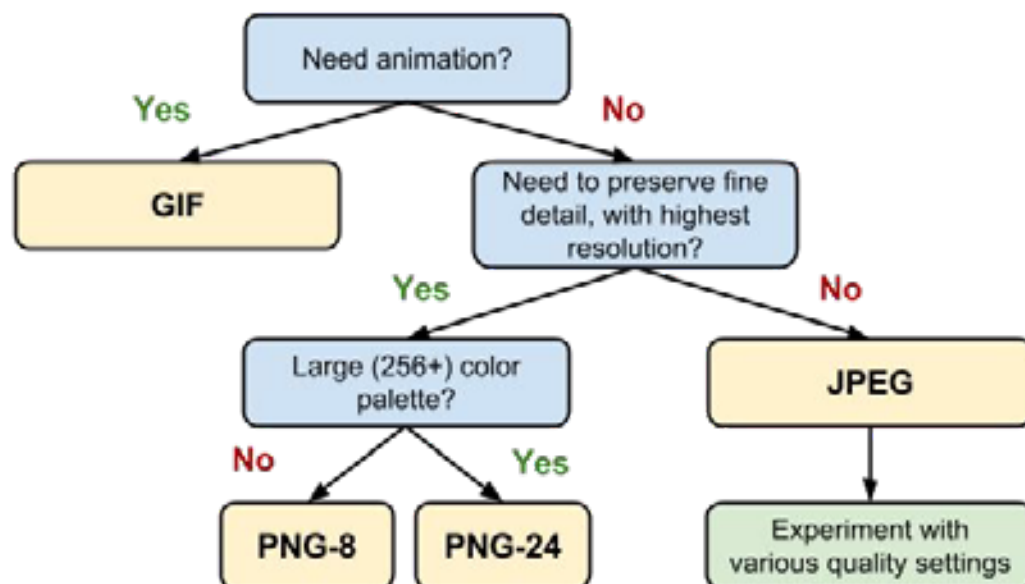
### Do you need to preserve fine detail with high resolution? Use PNG.

- i. PNG does not apply any lossy compression algorithms beyond the choice of the size of the color palette. As a result, it will produce the highest quality image, but at a cost of significantly higher file size than other formats. Use PNG judiciously.
- ii. If the image asset contains imagery composed of geometric shapes, consider converting it to a vector (SVG) format.
- iii. If the image asset contains text, stop and reconsider. Text in images is not selectable, searchable, or “zoom-able”. If you need to convey a custom look (for branding or other reasons), use a web font instead.

### Are you optimizing a photo, screenshot, or a similar image asset? Use JPEG.

JPEG uses a combination of lossy and lossless optimization to reduce file size of the image asset. Try several JPEG quality levels to find the best quality versus file size trade-off that is suitable for your asset. [18]

Figure 47. Optimizing the efficiency of your images, by flow chart



Source: <https://developers.google.com/web/fundamentals/performance/optimizing-content-efficiency/image-optimization>

#### 3.2.5. Having the right 'alt' text (alternative image titles):

HyperText Mark-up Language (HTML) defines an image tag which renders your product's image on the website. The "alt" attribute provides alternative information for an image if a user, for some reason, cannot view it. An example of HTML is:

```

```

Always remember to give your images good alt attributes; alt text strengthens the message of your articles (products in this context) with search engine bots and improves the accessibility of your website. The alt text describes the image and the purpose of the image on the web page. So, if you are using an image as a button to buy a product, say X, the alt text should be: "buy product X."

### 3.3 Inventory Management

#### 3.3.1 Managing the product database by easy segregation

You may notice that submission of product details/fields have been segregated into different parts in the product upload module, as shown in the image below of segregation of data in the product uploading process.

The screenshot shows the 'Add New Product' form in the wesellonline.org interface. The form is divided into tabs: General, Size & Price, Images, Specification, and Product Tag. The General tab is active, showing fields for Product Name, Stock, Brand, Main Category, and Sub Category. Below these are checkboxes for 'Manage Inventory', 'Featured', and 'Custom Template'. There are also buttons for 'Set Product as New from Date' and 'Set Product as New to Date'. At the bottom, there are radio buttons for 'In Stock' and 'Out of Stock', and a 'Description' field.

This segregation not only makes a meaningful categorization of the product's attributes but also makes the process of uploading product details easier.

#### 3.3.2 Status of the product – in stock or out of stock

Inventory is the stock (quantity) of tangible goods, products, you offer your customers. These goods are catalogued into an inventory management system. The goods that are mentioned in a catalogue can either be finished products, goods that are in production, or raw materials. E-commerce businesses mainly deal with finished goods that are currently in their possession and ready for dispatch. Inventory is the stock of product items/ goods that a company keeps on hand that are ready to be ordered.

In addition to helping e-commerce business owners learn how their products are selling, inventory management provides other benefits, including:

- i. Business owners can keep product information up to date. This helps to improve sales since owners are aware of which products are selling.
- ii. Decision-makers can have more control over multichannel order flow.
- iii. Improved details about the stock position with inventory management tools, resulting in better decision making and improved warehouse stocking of products to avoid any shortfalls.
- iv. Product data is synchronized across all the platforms in real-time.

You may notice in the below under subsection 1 (Managing the product database by easy segregation), inside the **Update Product** Details section, under the **General** tab, there is an option to choose between *In stock* and *Out of stock* to indicate whether the product in question has sufficient quantity.

Dashboard

Products Master <

Products <

Services Master <

Services <

Enquiries Received <

Support Tickets

### Update Product Details

**General** Size & Price Images Specification Product Tag

(Fields marked with \* are compulsory)

**Product ID: 488**

Product Name \* Dress

SKU SKU

Model Model

Brand - Select Brand -

(To add brand, navigate to Master -> Brand)

Main Category \* Womens Fashion

Sub Category \* Clothing

Third Category Select Third Category

☐ Custom Template

☒ In Stock ☐ Out of Stock

### 3.3.3 Categorizing products based on different fields like size and colour

- Product categorization** is the process of placing and organizing products into their respective categories. It merely means choosing the correct department for a product. Through the proper classification of your products, you can increase conversion rates (number of customers) and improve your product's ranking in search engines.
- Making your website user-friendly** and easy to navigate is one of the most critical elements of your website design and will lead to higher conversion rates. If the product categorization is done properly, customers will be able to find what product they need quickly and easily.
- Most visitors won't access your website directly.** Thirty-five percent of people start the product search in the search engines like Google. You should create the relevant landing pages for your products. This enables Google and other search engines to index your website and your products more efficiently. Finally, this allows your products to get a higher rank on search engine results, increasing the likelihood that customers will be directed to your site.

### Color and size of your products

You can assign the proper attributes for your products for specificity, and these attributes can be size, color, etc. You may assign the proper size to your products so that you can target a specific customer class. For instance, the variants for a t-shirt shall be small, medium, large, XL, XXL, etc.



The attributes you assign should be accurate and easy to understand for customers, no matter how complex the variations are. Keep in mind that customers might be selecting from a list of choices before viewing a product image, so the clearer you can describe what you are selling, the better.

For instance, instead of listing all of your three blue shirts as “blue,” give them unique attributes, like sky blue, navy blue, and royal blue. Your print variation can be listed as “w/ metallic ink,” and your cuts should be named consistently between shirts as “athletic fit,” “loose,” and so on.

### **3.3.4 Downloading all relevant products based on the search**

The entrepreneur dashboard comes with a feature to download your products for purposes such as product lookup, sales analysis and inventory management.

- i. Go to the **Products** menu in the sidebar, click on **View Products**. You may list all products or list them category-wise.
- ii. Now use the filters/ fields (category, date, etc.) to customize/ filter your search results.
- iii. Click on the “**Search**” button to see the results. You may also download the search results onto a spreadsheet.
- iv. Click on the “**Export**” button to download the spreadsheet.

# Module 4 .

## Payment methods, legal procedures, online disputes



## Module 4: Payment methods, legal procedures, online disputes

- Aim:**
1. To gain knowledge of the pros and cons of online business.
  2. To learn about the important details in online business, for example shopping carts, legal proceedings, and precautions.

### 4.1 Enquiry or Shopping Cart

#### 4.1.1 What is a shopping cart?

Definition: A shopping cart is a tool/application/ software used to facilitates the purchase of a product or service in any online platform. In wesellonline.org, we have an “enquiry cart” as it is a training platform for the time being and does not accept any kind of online payment. The enquiry cart provides entrepreneurs with information about the customer and their need for goods/ services.



#### 4.1.2 Why shopping carts are important

Shopping carts bridge the gap between shopping and buying. So, having the best shopping cart software is extremely important for your website.

It is likely that e-commerce entrepreneurs just starting out in the market may be unfamiliar with the concept of a virtual shopping cart. Most people, especially those in the e-commerce industry, have made a purchase online at some point of time in their lives. But even with this experience, most consumers still don't fully realize the significance that shopping carts have (besides leading a customer to checkout).

A cart typically has three common aspects:

- i. It stores product information
- ii. It functions as a gateway for order, catalogue and customer management
- iii. It renders product data, categories and site information for user display

#### 4.1.3 Features of shopping cart

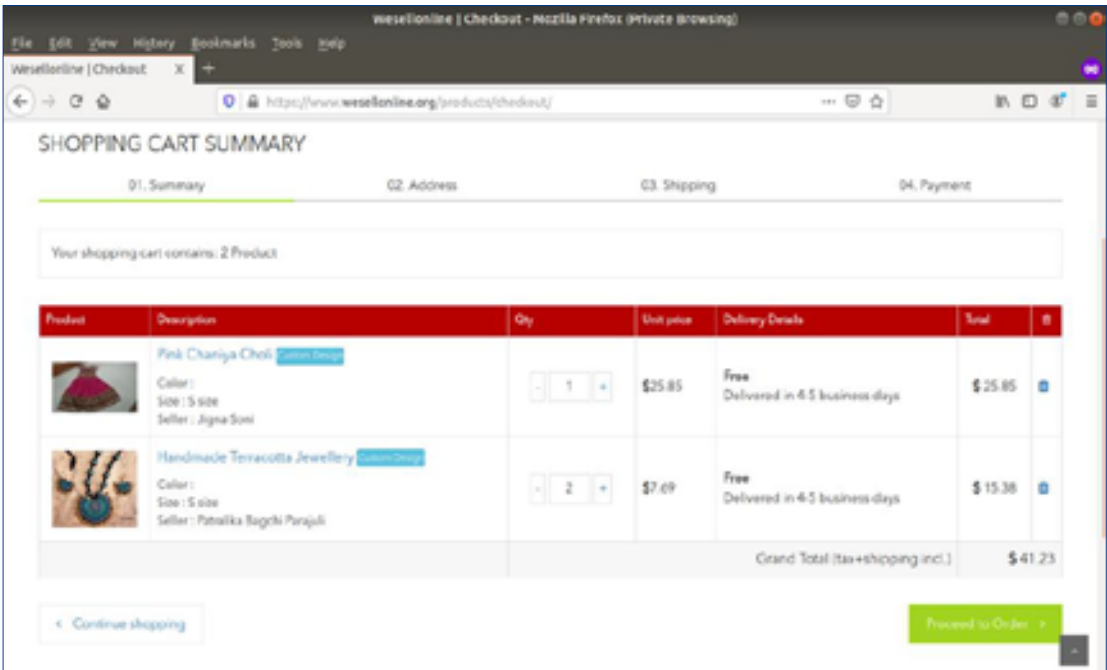
- i. Shopping carts facilitate the customer to buy all the items in one go instead of buying them one by one.
- ii. Carts provide a portal into orders, catalogues and customer management.
- iii. It enables the customer to review items he has selected to buy and can add or remove items any time before ordering.
- iv. The cart also allows the customer to add items or take items out, and edit the quantities of the items selected.
- v. Shopping carts can have a shipping charges calculator and link to a shipping gateway.

4.1.4 Types of shopping carts

**Hosted shopping carts:** A third-party firm "hosts" the solution and is responsible for server backups, maintenance, and upgrades. This solution is generally free. The main drawback with hosted solutions is that customers will be directed to another domain for payment processing.

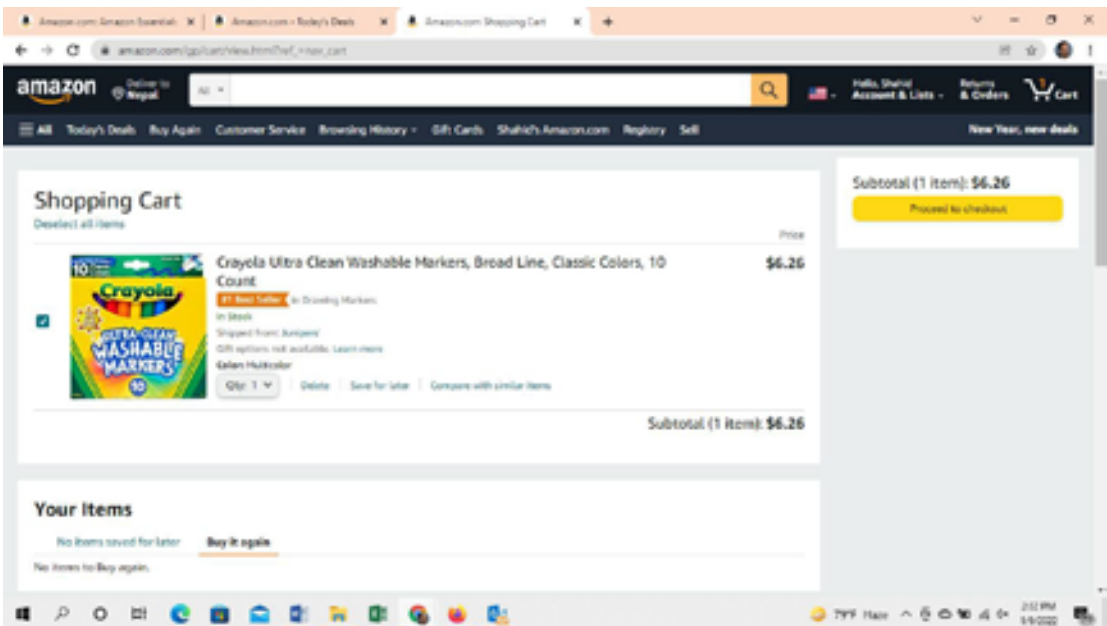
**Licensed shopping carts:** This type of solution allows business owners to build their own kind of cart and customize it to their specific needs [19].

Figure 48. A typical shopping cart in the wesellonline.org portal, featuring products, quantity and price



Meanwhile, an Amazon shopping cart looks like this:

Figure 50. Sample Amazon shopping cart featuring product, photo, and subtotal



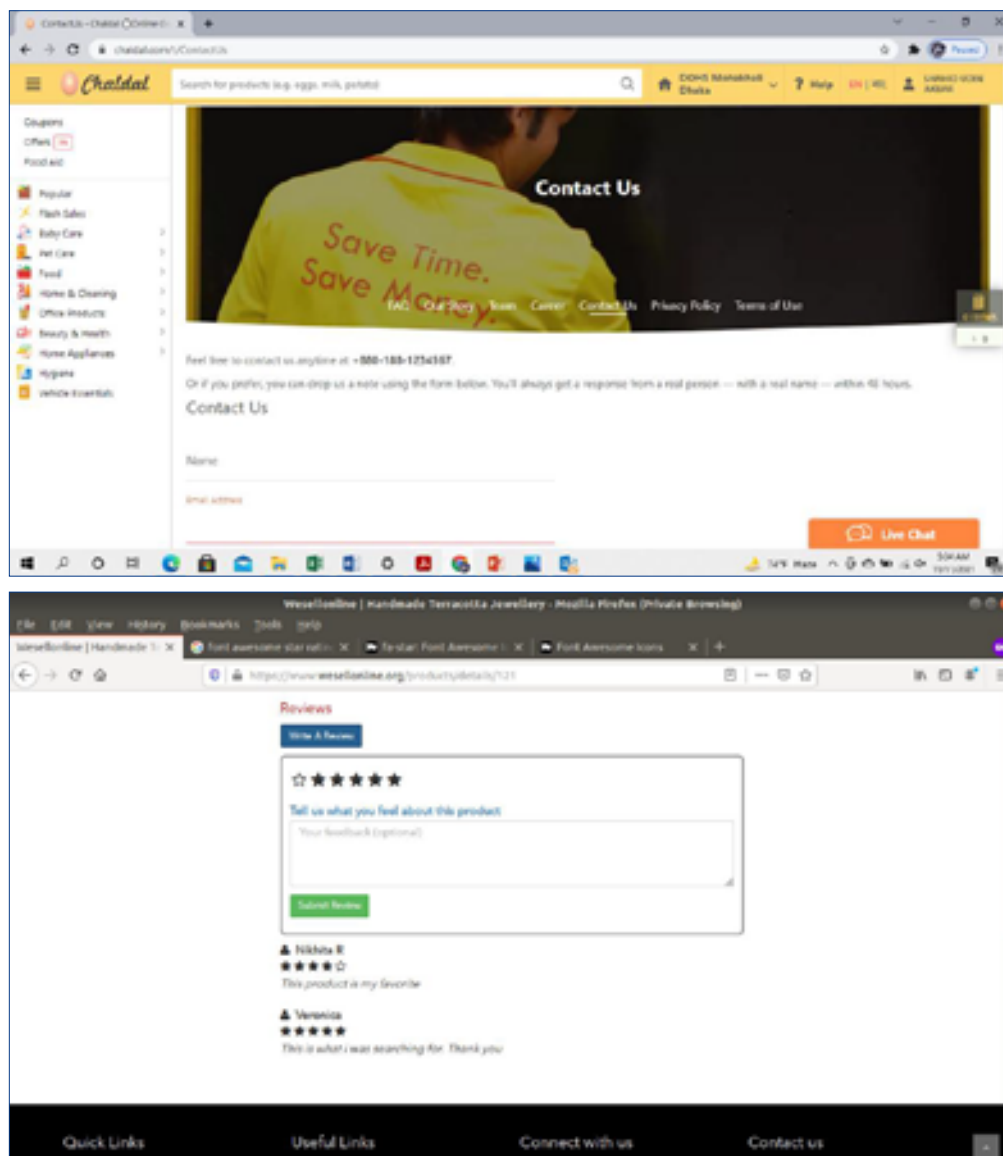
### 4.1.5 Receive reviews from the customer

Product reviews are an essential part of an e-commerce portal's branding and marketing. Reviews help build trust and loyalty.

Reviews are valuable because:

- i. They increase sales by providing customers with the information to make the decisions about purchasing the product.
- ii. Most customers won't buy an item without first reading what other customers have said about the product. They buy products that have already been recommended by other users.
- iii. Product reviews have become crucial due to the lack of the ability for a customer to test the product before buying it online.
- iv. Reviews can help increase your store's online presence, too. Since customer feedback appears on each product's page, reviews can help pages to appear on the search engine results via unique keywords.

**Figure 51. Customer reviews of products featured in various online portals**



#### 4.1.6 Suggesting the products based on cart or searches made

Any e-commerce website should also suggest similar products related to the product being viewed by a customer. The wesellonline.org portal does this too. It suggests related products for the results against a search by the customer for a product. Identifying related products boosts your sales by creating:

- i. **Natural product relationships:** Related products remind buyers what they may need further, for example, batteries for a camera, a power bank for a smartphone, pen drive for a laptop, etc.
- ii. **Collective behaviour product relationships:** We may improve the sales by monitoring the aggregated buying patterns of many customers over time. This is different from natural product relationships, which can be better understood by an example. "*Java, the complete reference*", and *Microsoft Longhorn Programming: The Complete Reference* are two books (related to programming) from the same author Herbert Schildt. Both are not related to each other, but students/ programmers may buy them because they are from their favourite author.
- iii. **Community behaviour product relationships:** Community behaviour (or group behaviour) is discovered when we categorize collective behaviour trends by demographics or specific customer behaviours (persona). The idea here is to identify the buying groups or personas within collective behaviour trends so that we can use those relationships with new customers based on an assessment of which community or persona he/she matches.

### 4.2 Legal Guide for e-commerce

#### 4.2.1 Terms and Conditions

It is essential to have "Terms and conditions" listed on your website if you're selling any goods and providing a service online. The terms and conditions page of your website reflects how you will deal with all the circumstances or issues which may arise unexpectedly in the future. This page also defines the rules and regulation any user should follow while using your website. More importantly, terms and conditions act as a legal binding contract between you and your users, and it sets the specific rules and regulations which the user should agree to.

Terms and conditions include the following elements in any website:

- **Limit of liability**

Limit of liability acts as a disclaimer, which guards an entrepreneur against financial risks through the removal of all the information which might be responsible for creating errors in the website. If a website allows visitors or users to comment or add content on the website, like commenting on the blog or sharing content on-site, then the limit of liability clause protects an entrepreneur against risks of loss arising out of such information which may cause a conflict on the website.

It is also essential to state that any third-party content on the site is not endorsed by the site owner, and is not indicative of their opinion. It is also necessary to state that the website owner will not be responsible for any content added by a third party.

- **Copyright**

There should be a section informing all the users and visitors about the ownership of all the



information, like content, logo and branding. Any website selling products, or offering services, should have a copyright notice section.

### • **Change Clause**

The site owner has all the rights to change or modify the information or statements on the website without reference to the user at any time. In websites like forums or blogs, the content is user generated. Whenever an alteration or change is being made by the users, the website owner receives an e-mail about the changes made. The complete terms and conditions agreement will cover many other aspects of how you can run and operate your website and business.

### **4.2.2. Company Information**

Providing company information is necessary as it mainly focuses on the target audience, and it also helps the user to find details about how the business operates and the owners. Having a company profile on your website gives you an opportunity to describe your business the way you want it to be displayed to your target audience. Keeping this in mind, listed below are some of the benefits of having a unique company profile on your business website:

1. It helps you to explain your business to the target audience and also share products or services offered by you.
2. **It helps you to tell your company's story effectively:** It is vital to understand the necessity of storytelling in business. Your story effectively explains the business, how and what you do to grow your business, what offers do you provide, etc.
3. **Brand Promotion:** Your company profile also helps you promote your brand among the public.
4. **Explain about business history:** It's good to talk about business history, achievements, and business milestones in your company profile, which creates a positive impact on the user viewing your profile.
5. **Target audience:** Last, but not the least, your company profile can also help you talk to your target audience, and even clearly state how important they are to you and the business.

You need to consider the following things when writing a company profile for your business.

1. **Keep it simple:** Explain the information in such a way that people/ users can easily connect and understand.
2. **Include the right details:** Make sure the facts and details you mentioned in your company profile are accurate and authentic.
3. **Be clear and straightforward:** Clarity and explaining relevant information are also essential in business communication.

### **4.2.3 Product Compliance (quality, information, validity, shipping geographies, regulatory, etc.)**

Product compliance means that the entire product meets the requirements set by directives, regulations, and harmonized standards. Managing product compliance properly saves time, legal hassles, and enables companies to minimize the risks of facing a loss.



#### 4.2.4 Product Quality

Product quality specifies all the important features a product should include to meet the needs of a customer, or what exactly a customer expects.

##### Meaning of Product Quality

The quality of the product mainly depends on important factors like:

- i. The type of raw materials used for making a product.
- ii. How well are the various production technologies implemented?
- iii. The skill and experience of the workforce involved in the production process.
- iv. The availability of production-related requirements like power and water supply, transport, etc.

The five main aspects of product quality are listed below:

- i. **Quality of design:** The product should be designed considering all the customer needs and high-quality standards.
- ii. **Quality conformance:** The final product should meet the product design specifications.
- iii. **Reliability:** The designed product should be reliable and durable.
- iv. **Safety:** The final product should be safe for the customer's use and handling; it should not be harmful to the consumer in any way. In case of hazardous goods, do mention the precautionary measures to be taken at all the stages i.e., before, during and after the use of the product.
- v. **Proper storage:** The product must be packed and stored properly. Its quality must be maintained until its expiry date.

#### 4.2.5 Product Information

Providing correct information about the product will help the consumer to purchase the desired products. The designed product should fulfill all the needs of the customer and solve all the problems. For example, if a customer needs a digital camera for a night time wedding event, she will look for a camera that successfully performs well under night conditions. Hence, the product service provider must provide the specific product information like night mode, resolution of the camera etc.

#### 4.2.6 Shelf life/ expiry date

The service provider, who releases the product for the consumer, should specify the product's manufacturing date, shelf life period and expiry date, if any.

#### 4.2.7 Logistics for delivery

In e-commerce ventures, logistics is the process of posting/ couriating/ shipping products ordered to customers or transporting an inventory to a merchant. Customers should receive ordered products intact and in a timely manner. While determining the delivery date at the time of booking, you must ensure that all conditions of delivery (distance, modes of transport, etc. are taken into account).

#### 4.2.8. Five types of regulatory requirements to be aware of

One should be aware of the following key types of regulatory requirements to maintain product compliance.

##### Product-specific Safety Standards

There are different categories of products, and every product has a specific standard. For example, products like children's toys, apparel, furniture, rugs, foods etc. have different categories. Your products may fall into more than one category.

There are international service providers (SGS, Bureau Veritas etc.) that facilitate the compliance services, including audits and certification. National standards for regulatory compliance are set by government agencies, such as the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) in Bangladesh, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) in India, and Sri Lanka Standards Institute in Sri Lanka .

A regulatory robot is the tool used by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in the United States. These tools help you in getting a general idea of what regulations can be applied to your product. One can also consult with the test lab or product compliance consultant to gain clarity about all the rules that are applicable to your product.

##### Substance regulations

Many ingredients are used in processing raw materials which may be dangerous to health, safety or the environment. These include hazardous or waste materials. Following the local procedures and guidelines for processing or manufacturing is essential.

##### Requirements for documentation

Each country has its own set of regulatory compliance requirements, which must be complied with. Compliance will also require maintaining documents to prove regulatory compliance while marketing products either domestically or internationally. There are some declarations that need to accompany your product during shipping in order to to comply with all of the regulations in the country of import.

You need to work effectively with your freight forwarder to ensure all the correct documents are included with the shipment, whether it is for import or export.

##### Requirements for labeling

You must comply with the labeling requirements prescribed in the market that you are supplying or targeting. If you do not comply with the regulatory requirements, then your products cannot be marketed. Consulting the relevant authority (the government agency, certifying institutions etc.) will help to determine what type of labeling requirements are necessary for your specific product.

##### Requirements for testing

Some classified products need to be sent to a lab to be tested for quality and/ or the presence of harmful substances. Lab tests can provide confirmation about your product, which needs to meet the specific regulations on all substances. After testing, be assured that all your products can be supplied easily with no further risks of rejection.

## Be sure you manage product compliance the right way

Product compliance is not that easy; many rules and regulations apply, including documentation, labeling, testing of harmful substances, etc. All the regulations depend on the specification of the products. Therefore, consulting a product compliance expert is very important to meet all quality check requirements.

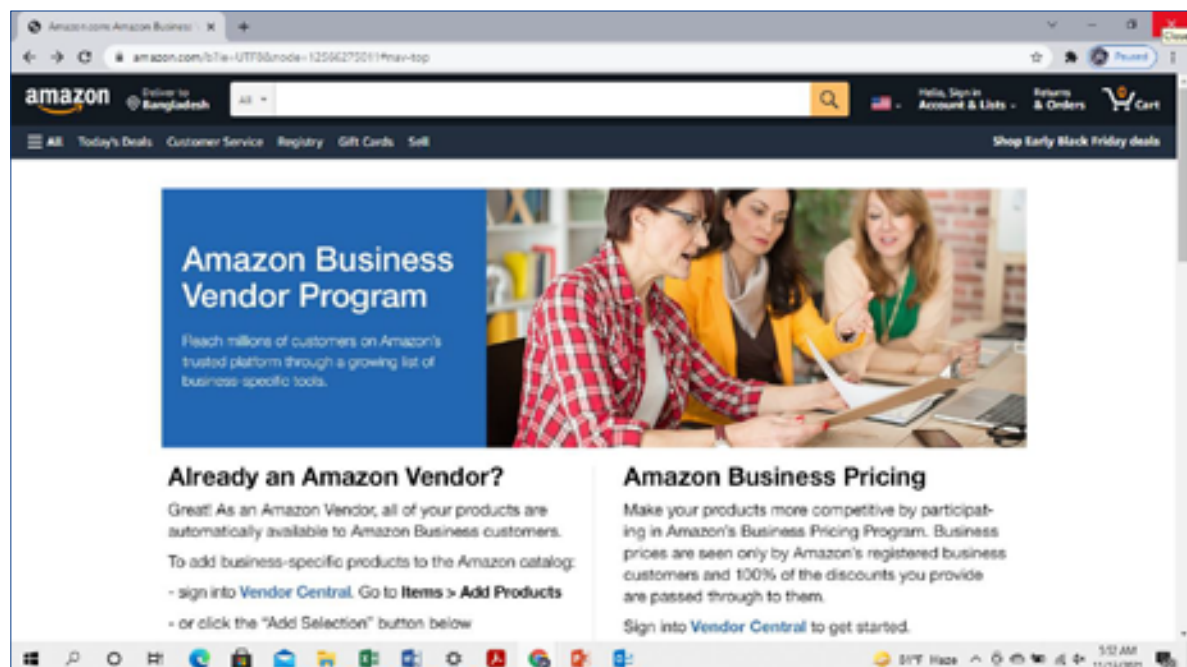
Apart from regulations, voluntary standards not required by law can also be applied to a product. Voluntary standards are mostly consumer driven. You should be aware of all these terms prior to importing/exporting a product. Once you are sure of all the requirements related to product safety, regular product inspection should be conducted. This will help in easy shipments of products without any risk.

## How to prepare for your quality inspection

Only you know your product inside and out, and you need to check the product specifications and take responsibility for all other quality aspects. It is not a bad idea to think of hiring a professional to conduct an inspection of your products. Even then, before handing over the inspection to your consultant, you need to provide the complete information of the products to ensure a successful inspection outcome.

### 4.2.9 User rights and responsibilities

Being aware of the user rights in the marketplace you are selling on is fundamental because it defines the way that users can interact while using websites, and other queries related to setting up an online store, managing product lists, and filling out order forms. As a vendor, you are entitled to certain responsibilities and rights, which you can learn from the respective e-commerce platform. It also may be useful to understand what type of support services are being offered to educate vendors.



#### • Product

Below is the list of permissions that can be allotted to control the ability to add, edit, view or delete product records and also manage specific functions. These are standard procedures followed by most e-commerce portals.

### i. Viewing records

This permission controls the access to view individual product details. If it is set to No, the user can view the product list, but will be denied access to details. In addition, the user will not be able to create product bundle links. If the “Can delete” permission is on the user will still be able to delete products. If the “Can add” permission is set to Yes, the user will still be able to add a new product, but won’t be able to access it again after leaving the new product screen. This controls the user’s ability to view product details; if this setting is set as No, the receiver will receive access when he/she views the product. If the user denies the access, then he/she will not be able to create product links.

### ii. Editing records

This permission controls the ability to change products once they’ve been created. If it is set to No, the user will not see the Save button when they click into a product record. In addition, the user will not be able to create product bundle links. If the “Can delete” permission is set to Yes, the user will still be able to delete products. If the “Can add”, permission is set to Yes, the user will still be able to add a new product, but won’t be able to fill in any product details after adding it.

### iii. Adding products

This permission controls the ability to enter new products. If it is set to **No**, the user will receive an **access denied** message when they click on the **Add a Product** button; however, if the user has permission to import contacts, they will be able to import products too.

### iv. Searching the product list

This permission controls access to your product list. If it is set to **No**, the user will not see **View Products** or **Product Categories** in the **Product** menu. They will also receive an **access denied** message when they click on the **Products** link under **Product Setup** in the E-commerce Setup screen.

### v. Deleting product records

This permission controls the ability to delete a product record. If it is set to **No**, the user will receive an **access denied** message when they try to delete a product from the product list. They will not see the Delete option under the Actions menu on the product list or the **Delete** button when viewing an individual product.

### vi. Digital product merge fields

This permission controls the ability to create a delivery email that has the product download link, code, and/ or key merged into it. If it is set to **No**, the user will not see the digital product merge options when they create an email.

### vii. Encrypted digital product keys

This permission controls the ability to see the digital product keys stored in particular software.

### viii. Tracking inventory:

This permission controls the ability to increase or decrease product inventory from within a product record, if you’ve enabled inventory tracking. If it is set to **No**, the user will not see the **Product Inventory** tab when viewing a product record.

- **Order form**

These permissions control the ability to view, add, edit, and/ or delete order forms. Order forms are used to sell a specific product or subscription program.

- i. **Viewing all records:**

This permission controls access to view individual order forms. If it is set to **No**, the user can view the order form list, but will receive an **access denied** message when they click on an order form link to view the details.

- ii. **Can edit all records**

This permission controls the ability to edit an order form. If it is set to **No**, the user can view the order form list and click into an order form to view its details. The user will not see the **Save** button required to add or remove fields, change the product, or update any other order form settings. In addition, the user will not be able to clone an existing order form. If they **can add permission** is set to **Yes**, the user will still be able to create a new order form, but will not be able to edit it after saving the first time.

- iii. **Adding order forms**

This permission controls the ability to create order forms. If it is set to **No**, the user cannot create a new order form. If they can view permission is set to **Yes**, the user can still view a list of order forms and see the "Add an Order Form" button; however, the user will not be able to save changes to a form after clicking on it.

- iv. **Searching order forms**

This permission controls the ability to access order forms. If it is set to **No**, the user will see an access denied message when they click on Order Forms in the E-commerce area.

- vi. **Deleting order forms**

This permission controls the ability to delete order forms. If it is set to **No**, the user will not see the Delete option in the Actions drop-down menu on the order form list or the "Delete" button on an individual order form.

- **Shopping Cart -Managing the shopping cart**

This permission controls the ability to set up the shopping cart provided by the particular company. If it is set to **No**, the user will receive an **access denied** message when they click on the E-commerce Setup option in the main navigation menu. They will not be able to customize the shopping cart settings or design; however, they can still manage products and order forms using the related options in the e-commerce area.

#### **4.2.10 Disclaimer and limitation of liability**

With the ease and advancement of the internet, it has become very easy for anyone to start their own website. To start your own website, you don't need to have big corporate support; with proficient knowledge about the internet you can easily set up your own live website.

Owning your website allows you to access millions of potential customers. With less investment; you can offer services and goods comparatively at a lower cost than a physical shop.

However when you own a website, you need to have a disclaimer to protect your business from any kind of legal liability.

## What is a website disclaimer?

Disclaimers added to a website act as a notice to users that the content of the website is protected from legal disputes. Your content on the website is the most important thing, and while it is necessary for you to confirm that all the information on your website is accurate, some users may still claim the information is inaccurate.

But with a proper disclaimer, you will be safe from any conflict leading to legal hassles.

By using disclaimers on your website, you can also safeguard features like copyright issues, product images, descriptions, etc. It is better to add a disclaimer on the website before launching the live site, to avoid any potential risks.

## Is a disclaimer the same as Terms and Conditions?

It is wrong to assume that disclaimer and terms and conditions mentioned on the website are the same. It is important to know the difference between the two, as both of these should be present on your website.

Below is the list of items included in the Terms and Conditions page:

- a) Legal bonds between the site owner and users.
- b) Limitations on the use of the website.
- c) Explicit rules about who can use the website.
- d) Permission for the user to use some material available on the website.

You can include a disclaimer as a subsection of the content on your Terms and Conditions page. The disclaimer and Terms and Conditions are different legal points, and both should be included on your site.

## What information should be included in a website disclaimer?

The disclaimer should outline the type of website you own. Ensure that the disclaimer is compatible with the type of website you have. Content on the website should also include the purpose of your site, which is important for the user to know.

## Disclaim liability for the accuracy of your information

The main aim of adding a disclaimer to your website is to avoid any legal disputes. If there is an unintentional error in the content of your website, it may lead to legal problems. In order to avoid this, you should clearly state in the disclaimer that there is no surety of accurate information for the content on your website pages.

## Repudiate any physical liability

It is important to mention in the disclaimer that the owner is not responsible for any harm arising out of physical products on your website. No owner intends to sell defective products leading to harm, and so a disclaimer on the product page will protect you from legal issues.

## State ownership over your content

If anybody tries to use the content of your website for other uses, you can claim ownership of the content for legal purposes based on a disclaimer on your website that clearly states it excludes this use of your content.

## **Renounce third-party responsibility**

Running ads on others' websites is the best form of marketing, but one does not have control over the ads, which are being served by a third party (other website owners).

Problems can occur on the backend of a websites a result of ads running. To protect yourself from any responsibility, it's best to have a disclaimer stating the site owner is not responsible for any action or failure of any third party.

The list mentioned above is only considered as a partial representation of the things/points which should be included in a disclaimer of your website. As a website owner, you need to comprehensively evaluate the specific legal protection needs that might apply to your business, by predicting any possible legal challenges that may arise for your venture.

If your disclaimer clearly mentions each element, you will be protected from legal liability.

### **4.2.11 Privacy Policy**

It is required by law to have a privacy policy on any website in which a user is asked to sign up or provide personal information. Privacy policies explain how the operators on the website can collect, store, protect, and utilize the personal information that the user provides while visiting the website.

Personal information provided by the user includes name, number, email address, IP address, date of birth, and other financial information like debit and credit card details for making any transaction, if any. The company needs to meet the legal obligations for using the personal information provided by the user.

#### **Who needs a privacy policy, and why?**

Any website that collects user information by tracking the user location must have a privacy policy.

E-commerce websites should have a privacy policy as they use cookies to track user behaviour. All websites need to indicate that the user has read all the privacy policies to avoid future legal problems. Privacy policies are a legal requirement followed by all countries worldwide.

#### **What to include in a privacy policy?**

The information in the privacy policy depends entirely upon what work or service the website provides, what personal information is gathered from website visitors, and how this information is used. A privacy policy should detail the following points:

- i. The information that will be collected from the website visitor, such as name, phone number, email address, etc.
- ii. Which cookies are being used on the website, how they will be used, and what the effect of this will be on the user's experience?
- iii. Who is collecting what type of data?
- iv. How the information will be used and shared with third parties
- v. The information is kept secure so that it is not misused for other purposes

Websites must also include other information such as whether any user is using Google AdSense, what information is provided by cookies, which links are used, and the third-party service providers listed on the site.



Payment modes are the main thing to be considered for any e-commerce website. The details and information related to payment transactions must be kept secure and the e-commerce business owner must make sure that the third-party payment gateway keeps all the information gathered during a transaction safely.

### **Writing your privacy policy**

A website owner might be tempted to copy-paste other websites' privacy policies. Although this seems to be a fast and easy solution, you should not do this; every business is unique, and hence every website should have its own privacy policy.

The privacy policy of another site might suit that specific business, but it will be inappropriate for yours. Privacy policies need to be tailored to the specific needs of your business, which you can figure out through detailed analysis of how your website and business functions.

### **4.2.12 Refund, return and exchange policies**

All e-commerce websites should clearly mention the refund, return and exchange policy. However, in reality only a few websites include statements about these policies, which is a disadvantage. Having clearly defined policies on the website will result in happy customers and also increase sales.

You can work harder to reduce the number of refunds by offering good service, high quality products, and rectification to solve any issues that arise. When your ideas don't work, you will end up providing a refund to the customer.

This is where it shows how important it is to have the refund policy on the website. Better than grasping at tactics to convince customers, having a refund policy that clearly informs customers about the terms and conditions on your website is the best solution for all the refund-related problems. Even a timely refund in eligible cases will go a long way to develop and secure customer loyalty, as it will help to build consumer trust in your website.

### **What is a return/refund policy?**

A refund policy indicates the terms of refund and returns offered by the e-commerce website. Customers always check reviews about refund policies before buying products online. So, it is better to have a good refund policy. If a website says that all the sales are final and no refunds will be issued, a customer may think twice before placing an order on the particular website.

On the other hand, if an e-commerce site offers a "60-day, no questions asked" refund, customers will feel more comfortable and gain the business' trust as there are no risks of loss to the consumer.

### **Who needs a refund policy, and why?**

To be a successful venture, you should provide a proper refund form, which will impress the customer. It is challenging to earn customer trust in online business, and it becomes even tougher when a situation like a requested refund arises.

Without a refund policy, it is difficult for a customer or user to navigate the website to find a solution to their issues.

Your sales will automatically improve if you add a refund policy to your website, because this builds the consumer's confidence to buy products from your website.

### **What to include in a refund policy?**

Compared to other legal content on a website, such as a disclaimer or a terms and conditions

page, creating a refund policy is relatively straightforward. The goal of this policy is simply to define the terms which will govern any refund or return request.

The refund policy essentially must cover the following important issues:

- i. Whether and when a customer is eligible for partial or full refund or conditions when no refund can be offered.
- ii. A clear statement of the methods that will be used to evaluate the product upon return.
- iii. Note in which circumstances the customer has the choice to replace the products, (for example, in the case of a defective product, the customer can exchange the faulty item for a new one).
- iv. It must be clearly stated whether the refunds will be issued to a card, wallet or directly to the bank account of the customer through net banking.
- v. In certain cases, the policy may also permit adjustments to amounts received against a fresh purchase.

### **What is an exchange policy?**

An e-commerce exchange policy outlines the rules and requirements for making an exchange or return. The policy is where shoppers go to gather information about the time frame for an exchange, acceptable return conditions, and whether or not there is any cost associated with an exchange. An exchange policy explains which items can be exchanged and the details of the exchange process. When it comes to retaining revenue, exchanges are one of the most powerful tools in a retailer's arsenal.

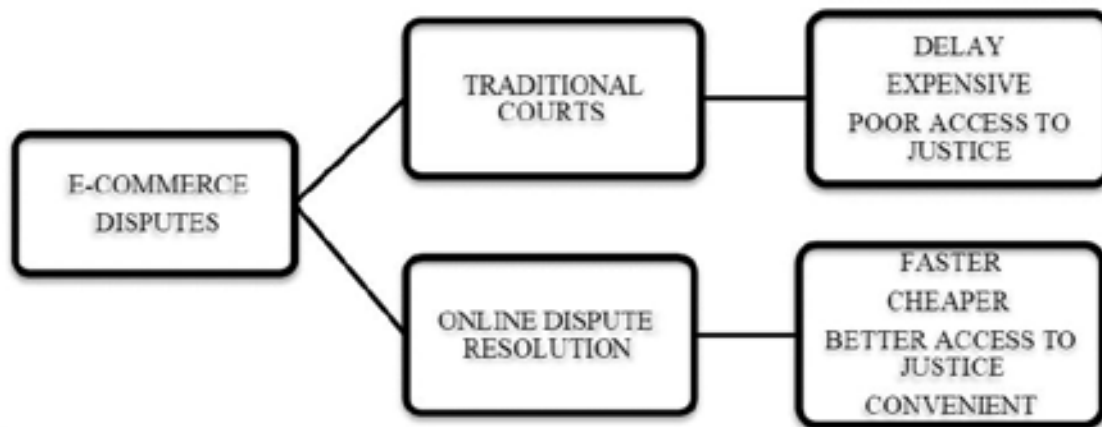
Unfortunately, the opportunity often dissipates because of long and complicated e-commerce exchange policies that push shoppers into requesting refunds instead. A robust exchange policy helps steer the ship back on course, incentivizing shoppers to exchange an item for what they really want, while retailers get to keep the sale. By taking a deeper look at the importance of e-commerce exchanges policies, and reviewing the best practices for writing a successful policy, you are more likely to be able to utilize this tool to your advantage..

#### **4.2.13 Managing disputes**

Since e-commerce transactions are faceless and without any personal contact, there are certain limitations to the relationship. Without in-person interaction with a tangible product in hand, consumers do not always have confidence in the seller, the quality of products and the financial transaction. As a result, when coupled with poor direct communication with the seller, disputes can arise more frequently than they would in normal face-to-face business transactions.

Several factors can contribute to online disputes. Some of the common factors include misleading product information, defective products that are not of satisfactory quality, and unsecured websites. As an entrepreneur, it is your duty to recognize the rights of the consumer and try to resolve conflicts amicably, or else the consumer may resort to the court of law, which for business owners is more expensive, time consuming and risky, as it may stain the business with a bad reputation. Many countries have Consumer Protection laws to ensure that the rights of consumers are protected.

In e-commerce transactions, both consumers and business owners are more at risk of a dispute due to the limited nature of the interaction in the digital sphere.

**Figure 52. Online dispute resolution versus traditional courts for e-commerce conflicts**

Source: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323356142\\_ONLINE\\_DISPUTE\\_RESOLUTION\\_A\\_NEW\\_APPROACH\\_FOR\\_E-COMMERCE\\_DISPUTES](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323356142_ONLINE_DISPUTE_RESOLUTION_A_NEW_APPROACH_FOR_E-COMMERCE_DISPUTES)

### Online Disputes Resolution

Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) is a broad term that encompasses the use of many alternative forms of communication as part of the dispute resolution process. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods include the use of the internet, websites, email communications, browsing social media and other information technology to resolve issues between consumers and e-commerce traders.

Using computer-networking technology, ODR brings disputing parties together “online” to participate in a dialogue to resolve their conflict [22].

Generally, the complainant initiates the ODR process by registering a complaint online with an ODR provider, most of which are private companies. The ODR provider will then contact the other party using the information provided, and invite the other party to participate in the ODR process. If the other party accepts the invitation, he or she will file a response to the complaint. The ODR providers employ one or more of the following dispute resolution techniques or mechanisms - (1) arbitration, (2) mediation, or (3) negotiation [23].

### Business Conflict Management

In any ongoing business which is fast growing, some amount of conflict in the management of the business is bound to arise and the leaders/ business owners/ entrepreneurs need to keep their eyes and ears open as soon as the symptoms of unease begin until they are finally resolved. The following few lines will elucidate this further.

### Diagnose dispute symptoms

Conduct an audit of what all types of conflicts that may arise in the business and how you handle them. Who are the main parties involved in the conflict? How often do such problems occur, what causes problems to grow and what would defuse them? Employees are also essential, and when a problem arises with an employee, you must be aware of how it is dealt with. When employees are upset with something, do they complain among themselves or directly have a word with the authority? What is the solution for all these problems? The following are the few steps that a DSD (Disputes Systems Design) architect in an organization must pursue.

## Apply DSD principles

An entrepreneur/ business owner /leader should always maintain a cordial relationship with his or her employees so that they quickly come forward to stand in your support whenever there is any problem in the business. Build a DSD System with a low-cost, and all-interested approach to reduce the issues. Before you handover the complete DSD system to your employee, make sure they will provide you with regular feedback.

## Implement your new DSD system

Employees themselves should choose the representative for the DSD system; the leader should promote or provide the solution for early conflicts. It is very important to ensure that whatever argument system you create is strong enough to withstand your departure from the organization.

## Evaluate the system

It is vital to give the system all the time and resources that it needs to function correctly. Before using it, it's better to check the system to see whether it can solve all the problems and provide the proper solutions. Check how cost-effective the system is, how strong the organization's internal relationships are and how immediate interventions contribute to problem-solving.

When we talk about the conflicts which one might face in a business, the list is long, but a few common conflicts within an organization are mentioned here below.

## Task Conflicts

Task conflicts are common occurrences that are difficult to manage. Task conflicts occur between two parties who are unable to move forward together due to differences in opinion on organizational policies to distribute or assign tasks, resulting in a conflict.

Although task-related conflict can lead to performance benefits, for example increased productivity as a result of competition for the responsibility of a desired task, this is jeopardized if conflicts deteriorate into personal relationship conflicts. Conflicts commonly arise over ideas about how the work should be done, or the best way to achieve results. While solutions can emerge from productive negotiations, in the worst case scenarios, *task-related* conflicts slide into *personal relationship* conflicts. This can occur for several reasons. Often it is because work criticisms or disagreements have been misinterpreted as personal attacks. Another possible reason is that harsh behaviour — for example, aggressive language, or humiliating or intimidating tactics — occurs in the heat of an intense debate.

## Relationship Conflict

Relationship conflicts derive from differences in personality, interaction style, taste, ways of thinking, etc. In a business environment, people who would not naturally interact are thrown together to work on a team where they must get along. Relationship conflict is often the result of a power differential that leaves one partner feeling more dependent upon the other. It becomes difficult for the organization when employees start complaining about colleagues or become disgruntled due to perceived favouritism.

This conflict can be easily mitigated by building improved and open relationships, or say cultivating a friendly relationship between employees, in which everyone knows each other very well and are open to feedback for improvement. As an entrepreneur it is your responsibility to ensure that employees maintain strong bonds and follow the common corporate objective.

## Value Conflicts

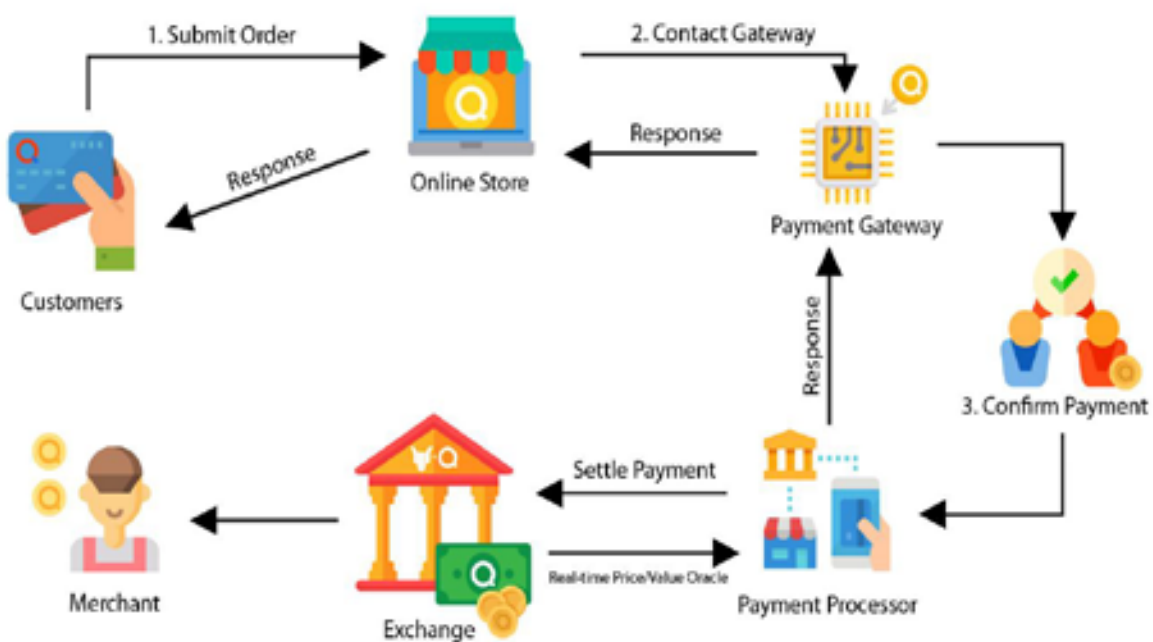
Value conflicts result from differences in politics, religions, and beliefs or perceptions of identity and can naturally arise in a diverse organization. It is fundamental that all employees agree to an internal policy of mutual respect, consideration and value for others' thoughts and ideas in the organization.

### 4.3 Third-party payment gateways

Third-party payment gateways are software entities that securely interface between an e-commerce portal and a customer's preferred mode of payment. These gateways help to receive online payments from clients without having to set up a vendor account with a bank. Generally, payments are received from clients via merchant accounts. Merchant accounts are the business bank accounts that accept online or card payments from clients. In case the business owner does not own a merchant account, they can rely upon the ones owned by a third-party payment processor.

If you have a small or medium business with only a few transactions every month, then setting up your own merchant account might not be economical due to the related costs involved (like setup fees, monthly fees, and transaction fees). For many businesses, third party payment gateways provide the perfect alternative to a merchant account.

**Figure 53. Third-party gateway flow chart, from consumer to vendor**



Source: <https://medium.com/qpay/qpay-unveils-payment-gateway-quash-edfa5cc6bd1e>

#### 4.3.1 Existing payment gateways

The decision to choose a payment gateway lies with the business owner. The absence of a reputable payment gateway linkage to your business portal could result in insecure payment systems, financial losses, and legal issues. There are some important factors that need to be considered when choosing a payment gateway.

## Security

The payment gateway provider for your business should make customers feel safe and secure. Your customers would never want to compromise and expect only a website that works with secure payments options. This is a crucial component for them. Your payment gateway should be reliable and provide an optimal experience to ensure the security of payment transactions.

## Cost

Most payment gateway providers charge a fee that depends on the amount and transaction frequency. It is essential to align the package of charges/ fees that need to be paid with your business needs. In case you miss or exceed the transaction limits, you could end up paying more. Hence, pick a payment provider who can also flexibly adapt to your needs as your business grows.

## Payment Methods

The payment methods for your business portal should be user-friendly and secure; this will lead to boost in sales. Further, as your business grows, the payment gateway should be able to scale along seamlessly. Therefore payment gateways need to both fit the business model and provide an easy checkout process for the customer.

### The popular payment gateways are listed below.

- Amazon Payments
- WePay
- PayPal
- Authorize.net
- 2Checkout
- Google Pay
- Worldpay
- OneBIP
- Simplify Commerce

### 4.3.2 Transactions using mobile wallets

A mobile wallet is a digital financial service that will be present on your Smartphone rather than your pocket. Mobile wallets are a type of payment service through which individuals can transact (receive/ send money) through mobile devices.

They have been designed like a virtual wallet which can be preloaded with your preferred amount of money from your bank account or credit or debit cards and spent online. They are known for their convenience, ease of access and making life simpler and more flexible. There are multiple reasons to use a mobile wallet, let us glance at some of them.

## Convenience

Mobile wallets allow financial transactions to be completed instantly. With limited taps and clicks, the process is finished. Further, it is simple to load money in the wallet. You can add

money easily via net banking, credit or debit cards. It will help you to skip the long line queues or waiting at the ATM for cash withdrawals.

### **Flexibility**

When you are using a mobile wallet, you need not enter the card number, expiry date, CVV code, and other details often required for purchases. Your credentials are stored after the initial registration, and with a single click, payments are processed.

### **Accessibility**

In a mobile wallet, all card details are stored in one place, which is easy to access and process whenever needed. Smartphones are portable and accessible, with features that stretch far beyond a mere communication device.

### **Multiple Advantages**

There are many advantages to using a mobile wallet, such as being able to process multiple transactions for bill payments (DTH, electricity, water, broadband, cable, etc.), purchase flights, buses or train tickets, buy movie tickets, groceries, and transfer money to other accounts. In today's digital age, mobile wallets are used extensively for payments.

### **Offers**

When using mobile wallets, you can get reward points, cash-back, bonuses, gifts, and incentives, which are an extra plus.

#### **4.3.3 Understanding the transaction settlement in case of third-party payment gateway including negotiating payment gateway commissions**

Transaction discount rate (TDR) is a fee that every payment gateway charges merchants to process transactions to their bank accounts. It can be a fixed percentage charge, like 2% plus taxes per transaction.

The processing rate is a percentage (of each transaction). Payment gateway charges can be negotiated in terms of TDR or processing rate. If the business's processing volume is large enough, the processor may lower its fees by reducing the percentage amount taken per payment. As merchant revenues can be substantial, even low percentage rates will still pay off for the processor and enable the processor to cover the costs of processing.

Credit cards are the basic form of payment accepted by the majority of retailers. Business owners need to accept bank agreements to process credit cards. Payment processing agreements generally have a significant impact on retailers, and there are different payment processing agreements, some of them are listed below.

Many payment processing agreements will have the PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) and the merchant needs to obey the rules of PCI DSS. During the process of negotiating the payment, it is important to know whether the PCI DSS is unilateral or reciprocal.

Merchant banks and payment processors should obey their own procedures, protocols, and guidelines when accepting any of the payment gateways; it is mandatory to ask for a copy of such document containing the guidelines. Many banks keep this kind of document confidential.

If any of the terms and conditions are breached, merchant banks and payment processors may have to pay penalty fees or fines.



## 4.4 Online disputes and fraud

### 4.4.1 Implementation of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)

ODR is a branch of dispute resolution; it involves negotiation, mediation or arbitration, or a combination of all three. ODR uses technology to facilitate the resolution of disputes between parties. It is considered an efficient mechanism to resolve online disputes affecting e-commerce.

Nowadays, most business transactions are made through digital devices and so it is crucial to understand the concept of ODR, which functions to facilitate solutions for online disputes.

Traditional dispute resolution techniques range from methods where parties have full control of the procedure to methods where a third party is in control of both the process and the outcome. In the digital sphere, it might be complicated to resolve the disputes through these primary methods. In ODR, information management is carried out by computers and software and also involves physical persons. The fourth party may do such things as sending automatic responses, organizing data, writing communication more politely and constructively. [28]

Because of the flexibility, adaptability, and versatility of ADR, there are a wide variety of techniques available to prevent, control, and resolve disputes. New techniques are constantly being developed to deal with the broad range of online conflicts to prevent or mitigate escalation and defuse tension.

### 4.4.2 Dispute Resolution Stages

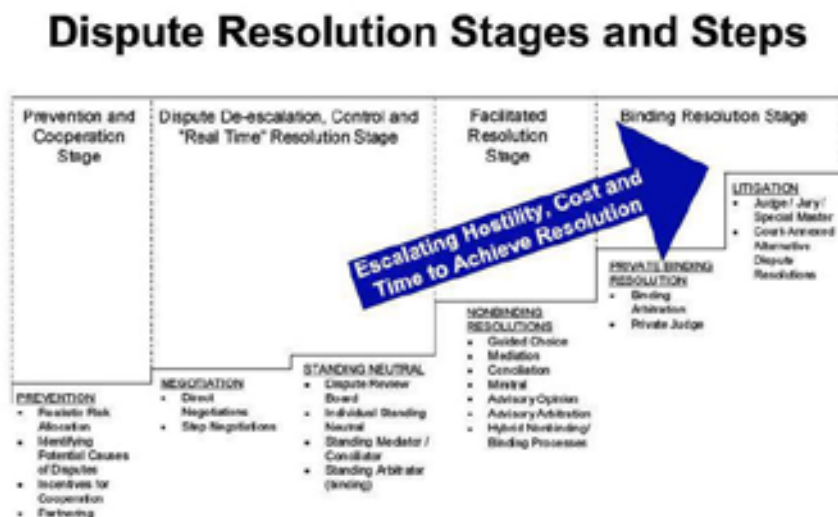
#### The Prevention and Cooperation Stage

In this stage the parties can use prevention and cooperation techniques to encourage the alignment of interests, minimize the adverse impact of problems, to improve cooperation, and curb adversarial attitudes.

#### The Dispute De-Escalation, Control, and 'Real Time' Resolution Stage

In this Stage Parties use techniques that are designed to deal promptly and realistically with the problems, to reduce tensions, to solve problems, at the time of disagreement, to gain instant resolution for the disputes. [29]

Figure 54. Dispute resolutions steps, from prevention to binding resolution



Source: imimediation.org

## The Binding Resolution Stage

When all other ways of resolutions fail, parties may have a “backstop” adjudication process in which disputes will be resolved by the third party either by a privately agreed process, or by default in the court of law.

### 4.4.3 Possible frauds during financial transaction

Fraud in e-commerce, also called purchase fraud, occurs on an e-commerce platform. Examples of e-commerce fraud include: the use of a stolen or fake credit card; assuming a false identity; and affiliate fraud advertising. When scammers approach e-commerce merchants, they may offer fake credit cards or stolen cards to pay the amount for purchased products, which leave the merchants without payment for completed sales. With the rapid rise in e-commerce, online fraud has also scaled up.

### 4.4.4 Best practices as a precaution for fraud prevention

#### Use fraud detection software

To prevent online theft, it is essential for business owners to be aware of areas or vulnerable points in a website where fraud could be perpetrated. For this, there are many types of leading software — from basic fraud scoring to modern machine learning software. Some e-commerce vendors have inbuilt scam detection measures. There are also third-party software applications that can be employed to reduce cybercrime risks and automate the task.

#### Decide what payment methods you will accept

Some payment methods may not be suitable for an online merchant, therefore it is important to discern which ones are appropriate. Not all payment methods are equal in terms of risk. Some payment gateways are merchant-friendly and others favour the card holder in case of disputes. As a merchant, select one which you feel confident about and matches your business risk taking capacity.

#### Analyze Address Verification System (AVS) codes

An e-commerce website should allow you to see AVS code, so that you can verify that the address provided by the shopper is the same location on file for the credit card issuer for that cardholder. An AVS mismatch doesn't necessarily mean that there is any kind of fraud, but it just alerts you to look at the order closely.

#### Use Card Verification Codes

In your website, payment processing uses a functionality which requires card verification code for all the purchases. This is a 3-digit code that is printed on the back of the physical card, which makes it difficult for a person to make purchases without the physical card. The code is not stored on the magnetic strip. Eurocard, Mastercard and Visa (EMV) chip cards still use these codes as a precautionary measure.

#### Awareness

In online business, vendors need to develop individual knowledge and intuition about the online orders that they receive. Vendors need to have a critical eye. Even a second opinion helps when an order looks suspicious.

## Following Payment Card Industry (PCI) Standards

The payment card industry has developed security rules and regulations for every e-commerce Company to follow. PCI standards make your transactions more secure; if you don't follow the standards, you can easily become a victim of e-commerce fraud.

## Setting Strong Password Requirements

To avoid fraud, secure passwords are necessary for transactions. Restrictive password requirements always frustrate us, but for security purposes, it is crucial; complex passwords protect customers and your business as well. It is a smart trick to always insert unique characters in the password to reduce the chances for hackers to attack you.

## Automated Workflow

To speed up the workflow, e-commerce merchants can automate tasks like sending order details to customers, payment verification checks, blocking suspicious devices, or fulfilling purchase orders. Even the detection and cancellation of seemingly irregular orders can be automated.

## IP Address Verification

IP addresses are usually from locations like the customer's shipping or billing address, or it may be from a web-hosting company or Proxy server. If the IP address is from an individual account, you might be dealing with a fraudulent customer. Business holders must deploy an e-commerce fraud prevention solution designed to monitor, track, and resolve such discrepancies for their website.

## SSL Certification

SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) Certification provides more protection to the business and customers as well. The SSL Certificate helps to encrypt the data in transit and helps to authenticate the identity of the company. For example, while shopping, to validate the credit card payment, a payment gateway uses online address verification services. This address and credit card details validate with the data listed online with their credit card company, and this credit card and address verification prevents fraudulent purchases.

### 4.4.5 Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) Arbitration Security

The Secure Sockets Layer was developed by Netscape in 1994. SSL is a web protocol that is designed to provide greater security to online communications. An SSL Certificate provides a secure channel between two devices (mobile phones, computers, etc.)

Nowadays, most commercial transactions and communications take place digitally. SSL helps to prevent the migration of crime to the digital sphere.

#### The purpose of SSL is to:

- i. Encrypt and safeguard the data transferred between browsers and servers.
- ii. Authenticate the server to which device is connecting to protect online customers.
- iii. To prevent malware and any kind of threats from affecting the parties which are involved in the communication (mobile phones and server). SSL Certificates analyze and verify the data which is sent.

## Steps to Understand How SSL works

- Step 1:** The SSL certificate goes into action when the browser tries to establish a connection with the web server of the e-commerce store as if it were a border crossing.
- Step 2:** The e-commerce web server sends a copy of your SSL certificate, something like an authorization for every browser request, which will indicate that everything is going on in order.
- Step 3:** The browser examines the authorization sent by the web server and determines whether or not the SSL Certificate is valid by sending a message to the web server. If so, the session will start, and data transfer will be encrypted through SSL.
- Step 4:** Finally, the transfer of encrypted data is shared between the browser and the e-commerce web server. It is just a matter of seconds for online customers. [30]

### 4.4.6 PCI-DSS Compliance

PCI-DSS stands for Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard. PCI compliance is mandatory for an e-commerce site. It is not dictated by the volume of transactions or restricted solely to storage, transmission, and processing; it applies to all the businesses which allow credit card payments. With PCI, the chances of an attack surfacing are reduced. All e-commerce websites must follow the requirements designed by the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI-DSS). Major credit card companies govern these requirements to ensure the secure transmission, storage, and to secure the cardholder information.

**Figure 55. The role of PCI Compliance in e-commerce.**



Source: elinext.com

The PCI-DSS's general purpose is to secure cardholder information, non-default passwords, creating a safe system and employing more in-depth practices to enhance security, such as through encryption and the use of a firewall. The PCI Security Standards Council is a global organization formed by major credit card companies, including Visa, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express.

## What happens if you're not PCI compliant?

If a merchant is found to be non-compliant with the PCI-DSS, there can be a variety of penalties and consequences, ranging from fines and the loss of time to reputation damage. If a data breach occurs and you're not PCI compliant, your business will have to pay penalties and fines. If you're not PCI compliant, you **run the risk of losing your merchant account**, which means you won't be able to accept credit card payments at all. In general, the following measures are taken in cases of non-compliance:

### PCI Non-Compliance Fines

Non-PCI compliant websites can suffer hefty penalties by payment industry regulators if customers experience fraudulent transactions.

### GDPR Regulation

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), any business that experiences the breach of European Union residents' personal information has 72 hours to notify supervisory authorities or risk facing heavy fines. This regulation joins a number of United States federal and state laws which hold organizations accountable for the security of customer data.

### Suspension of Credit Cards

Perhaps worse than fines, the ability to accept credit card payments may be revoked. The PCI standards are created by the major credit card companies, and this is their defense against irresponsible merchants. If a data breach occurs for your e-commerce store, the PCI council can revoke the privilege of using their payment cards.

### Mandatory Forensic Examination

Merchants suspected of a data breach are required by the PCI-DSS to undergo a mandatory forensic examination, which requires hiring professionals and conducting a time-consuming investigation. A small business examination may cost between US \$20K and \$50K.

### Notification and Credit Monitoring

If a compromise of financial information is suspected, a number of states require the merchant to notify customers and inform them of the breach. Merchants may also need to provide up to one year's worth of credit monitoring or counselling services to affected customers.

### Liability for Fraud Charges

Lawsuits may claim liability on merchants for security breaches. It is important to emphasize that protecting your customer's sensitive information is your responsibility as a business owner. That is why having a secure website is vital.

### Credit Card Replacement Costs

Card issuers may require merchants to pay the cost of re-issuing credit cards, which includes shipping, activation, and communication to the customer. These fees can range from \$3 to \$10 per card. [31]

### Reassessment for PCI Compliance

In order for a website to accept credit card transactions again, a complete PCI reassessment by an external Qualified Security Assessor (QSA) must be performed. [32]

## Importance of PCI Compliance

Trust is fundamental for an online business. If a security incident occurs, it can affect the brand's reputation, revenue, and business as a whole. Nowadays, as online shopping has become a common practice, e-commerce websites are primary targets for cybercriminals. Cybercriminals try to steal sensitive information about customers and also financial information such as credit card information and bank details.

For every e-commerce merchant who accepts credit card or debit card payments on their websites, PCI compliance is mandatory. The information given by the customer is sensitive data, hence it needs to be well protected. PCI-DSS provides steps to all e-commerce merchants for securing transactions. The intention of PCI-DSS is to reduce the risk of debit or credit card data loss. It provides a guide on how to react if potential data breaches occur, and it suggests how to detect and prevent data loss from occurrences. It provides protection to both merchants and customers.

It is important for customers to know whether a particular e-commerce website is secure or not, because they use their credit or debit cards to purchase the products and risk financial loss in case it is not secure. Every merchant must be PCI compliant as it helps to increase the level of security.

## Make Data Secure through PCI Compliance

The process of becoming PCI compliant requires undergoing a PCI auditing procedure to meet the PCI data security standard. Depending on the number of transactions processed by the company per year, the standard is differentiated into four levels. Level 1 is for merchants who process the highest transaction load per year; level 4 is for those with the smallest number of transactions per year.

PCI compliance is applicable to both the administrative and technological side of running a business and is updated regularly. PCI is an ongoing process that adds security to the business.

**PCI-DSS includes twelve requirements which are grouped into six areas for merchants and payment processors. These six areas aim to:**

- Build and maintain a secure network and system
- Protect cardholder data
- Maintain a vulnerability management program
- Implement secure access and control measures
- Regularly monitor and test networks
- Maintain an information security policy

### 4.4.7 Brands, Logo and Trademarks

#### Brands

Amazon, Flipkart, Microsoft, and Google are some of the most famous e-commerce companies. People hear about these companies almost everyday, though smaller companies with innovative solutions are often on our radars as well. The e-commerce market is always in flux.



For any company, great branding is the most powerful currency it can have. Before purchasing any product, people look for the brand; people purchase products because they trust the brand. For e-commerce merchants, building a robust and engaging online brand is the most essential work.

### **How can e-commerce merchants use social media to market their brand?**

Every e-commerce company should ideally have at least five social touch points:

- A home-base website or blog site with social 'like' button integration;
- a Facebook fan page;
- a Twitter/ Instagram/ Pinterest account;
- a LinkedIn company page;
- and a YouTube channel.

Social media has a wide reach these days, and hence it is essential to have social touch points to engage with customers at various levels. The benefits of social media for e-commerce include:

- Build brand awareness
- Expand your online reach
- Reach your target audience and attract online followers more quickly
- Help your brand to be shared online among further potential customers



### **Branding Strategies for E-commerce Businesses**

To make an e-commerce business successful, a merchant needs to have an effective branding plan; e-commerce merchants should determine what makes their business unique in the industry.



Are they providing high-quality products at average prices? Do they offer any regular discounts and offers to their customers? Are they adding new products to meet customers requirements? What are the factors that convince customers to select your product against others? E-commerce merchants must highlight the unique selling points of their brand — only then the brand can be promoted to the maximum number of people.

## **E-commerce Branding – Methods and Importance**

### **Your Brand Image:**

Unique and attractive brand image is essential to boost your e-commerce business. Brand image helps customers to understand your brand's personality. It includes logos, banners, captions, taglines, social content, etc. — all of which must represent your brand in the best manner possible.

### **Customer Satisfaction:**

For every business, customers are the most important component; each business holder needs to fulfill customers' requirements. When a customer purchases products regularly from your e-commerce site, you might need to add some additional products/service to continue to engage customers. This can take the form of discounts and special offers on items for both regular and new customers.

### **Find Your Unique Selling Proposition (USP):**

E-commerce merchants must work on and identify the unique selling proposition (USP) of their brand. This helps to promote their brands to a considerable number of users. E-commerce merchants should determine why people should choose their site for shopping over others. Does the site provide any discounts and special offers? What characteristic of your website is unique and attracts customers? Find your USP and use it to strengthen your brand. This calls for a complete understanding of your product, process, usage, shelf life, and the stakeholders in supply chain management. Your choice of a suitable payment gateway, timely deliveries, and customer-friendly refund policy will further contribute to maximizing customer satisfaction and attract him or her to your online platform/ store for their needs. This detailed understanding enables you to ascertain USP for your online business.

### **Utilize all channels:**

The use of advanced technologies now makes advertising the products and brands easy on social media. More than 3.6 billion people worldwide use social media, and to reach this consumer base through advertisements — by posting quality content, images, videos, etc. — kickstarts the customer engagement process. Social media is a vital tool to reach a larger audience.

## **Trademarks**

A trademark is a brand name. A trademark or service mark includes any word, name, symbol, device (or any combination of these) to identify and distinguish the goods/ services of one seller or provider from others, and to indicate the source of the goods/ services.

The essential function of a trademark is to identify the source or origin of products or services exclusively. A trademark indicates source or serves as a badge of origin. Trademarks ensure that others cannot legally copy or duplicate your product, and so are essential in business. [24]

## Marking products with trademarks

When people write a word that is a trademark or show a picture or symbol that is a trademark, this needs to be properly indicated. If a trademark is not registered, they can write the word “Trademark,” use the abbreviation “TM,” or use the symbol ™ on their products. If a trademark is registered, the letter R in a circle symbol is used: “®.” People can also say it is a “registered trademark” or use the abbreviation “Reg.” [25]

If a business holder wants to register a trademark for his company, he can do online easily with the [Trademark Electronic Application System \(TEAS\)](#). Applications for a trademark must include:

- The applicant’s name;
- A name and address for correspondence between the applicant and the authorizing agency of their country;
- A depiction or drawing of the mark;
- A list of the goods and/or services that will be associated with the mark; and
- Filing fee(s).

**Figure 56. Trademark images in various stock image formats online**



Source: Zaproo.com



Source: shopnix.in

## Three Tips that e-commerce businesses need to know about trademarks

Even a small company owner should at least try to register his or her company name, domain name, and key slogan. Any unique products being sold should also be trademarked.

### 1. The first user gets the trademark.

In the US, unregistered trademarks are designed. To create an unregistered trademark, you need to place the letters behind the name or phrase or image that you want to own. Sometimes there are duplicates; in this case, whoever used the title with the word trademark first will be the one to keep it. It is essential to make sure that you are not trying to use someone else’s trademarked name; in order to check this, you can conduct a quick online search to find out if the desired name is already in use and trademarked. If your desired name is available, then the best thing to do is to get it registered officially as soon as possible.

### 2. It is easier to protect distinctive trademarks.

This means that if your product name is well-advertised and distinctive, it makes it easier to protect your trademark, because it is associated with your company. It is important to note that just because you create a trademark doesn’t automatically give you all rights to it –

especially if it is something generic or descriptive which could be used in common language (for example, colour names, nouns, and so forth). [26]

### 3. Make sure you own your intellectual property

Intellectual property (IP) refers to creations of the mind, such as: inventions; literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols, names and images used in commerce. IP plays a significant role in enhancing the competitiveness of technology-based businesses and facilitates the process of taking innovative technology to the marketplace.

In today's global competitive business scenario, issues pertaining to intellectual property rights (IPRs) have become critical for the sustainability of micro, small and medium enterprises. IPR protection plays a very crucial role in achieving competitive advantage and technological gains as they are essential tools to promote marketing and innovation. [27]

If you make a contract with a web development company to set up your business, you might think you automatically own any intellectual (such as copy, images, description, and logos) used on your website. But it is not that simple; you should check your web agreement thoroughly to find who has rights to the intellectual property on your website. And the same thing applies to databases, source code, and scripts on your website. If you have an e-commerce site, then it becomes essential to protect your database for both legal purposes and your business integrity.

#### Logos

Having a logo for the company will give your brand a professional touch and an edge over other poorly designed websites. Your company logo will become your identity, which can be used on stationary, business cards, packaging, etc. Having an e-commerce logo for your online business is a vital part of your website, and it is the most trusted brand ambassador for your online business. To develop a suitable logo for your online shop, you need to consult a professional in this domain. Logos are vital to distinguish your brand from others. A professional logo designer will design high quality, customized logos that will help you to create a unique brand image.

# Module 5 .

## Registering with other online portals



## Module 5: Registering with other online portals

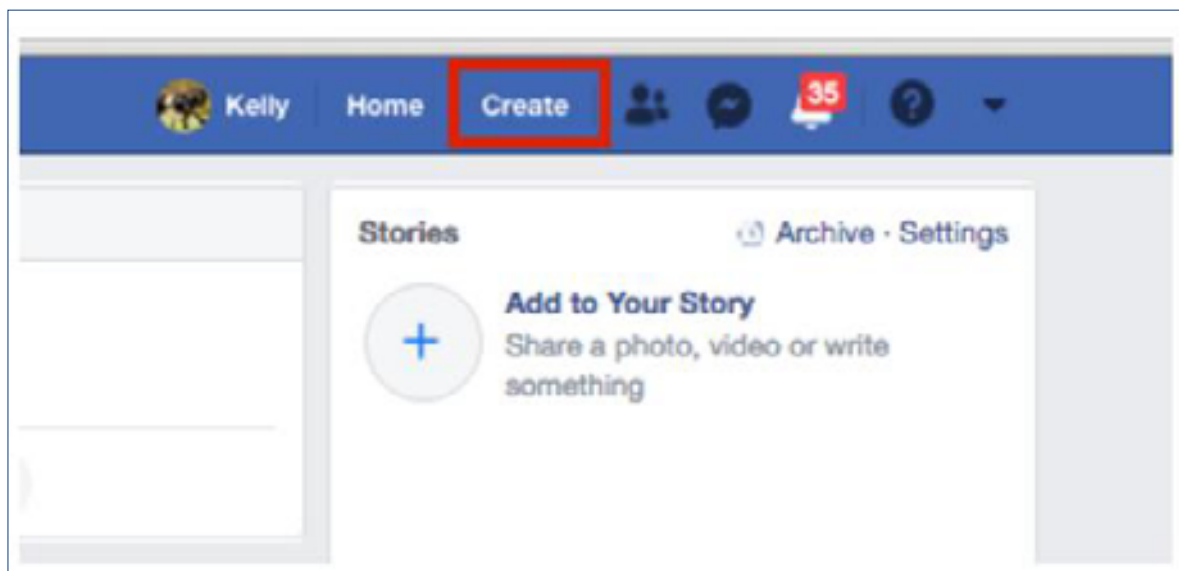
**Aim:** The aim of this module is to share knowledge on the methodology followed for registering on the online portals Facebook, Amazon, Alibaba and Daraz.com.

### 5.1 Registering with Facebook

1. Visit the page [www.facebook.com/r.php](http://www.facebook.com/r.php).
2. Your details, such as name, email, mobile number, password, gender, and date of birth should be entered.
3. Click on **Sign Up**.
4. To finish the registration of the Facebook account, you have to confirm your email or mobile number.

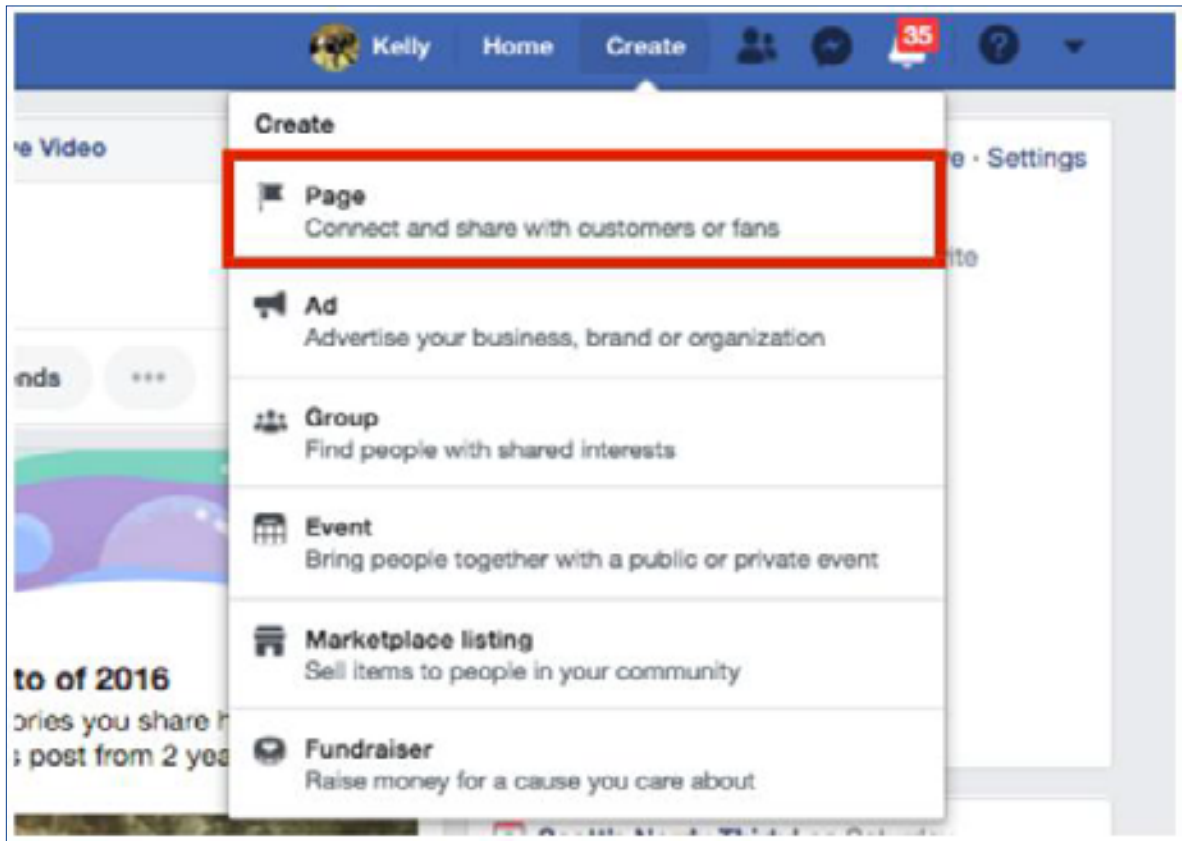
- **Registering for a Facebook Business Page:**

First, you should have a personal Facebook account to create Facebook business pages. Hence as a first step, first create your Facebook account by visiting the Facebook site. Then, find the “Create” button and click it, which is present on the right-hand side of the blue toolbar.



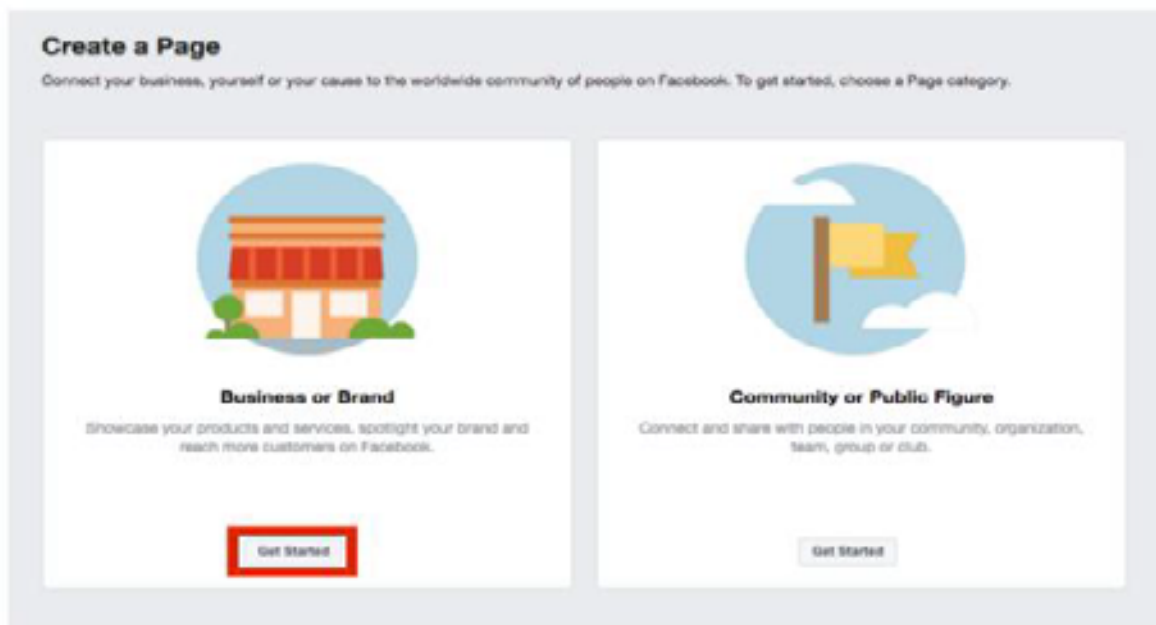
Select “Page” from the Menu.

A drop-down list will be seen after clicking “Create.” You have to select the first option, “Page” to create your Facebook Business Page.



### Choose a Page Category

You will have the option between two-page categories—a “Business or Brand” or “Community or Public Figure.” Most for-profit businesses will opt for Business or Brand.



## 5.2 Registering with Amazon

- To sell on Amazon, you have to follow the below steps:

Step 1: Go to [Services.amazon.com](https://Services.amazon.com)



Figure 57 Step-by-step guide to selling on Amazon



Source: <https://www.wholesaleclearance.co.uk/blog/amazin-brief-introduction-selling-amazon/>

Step 2: Here, you have to click on the link “Selling on Amazon.”

Figure 58 Online advertisements for vendors to sell on Amazon

**Reach hundreds of millions of customers**

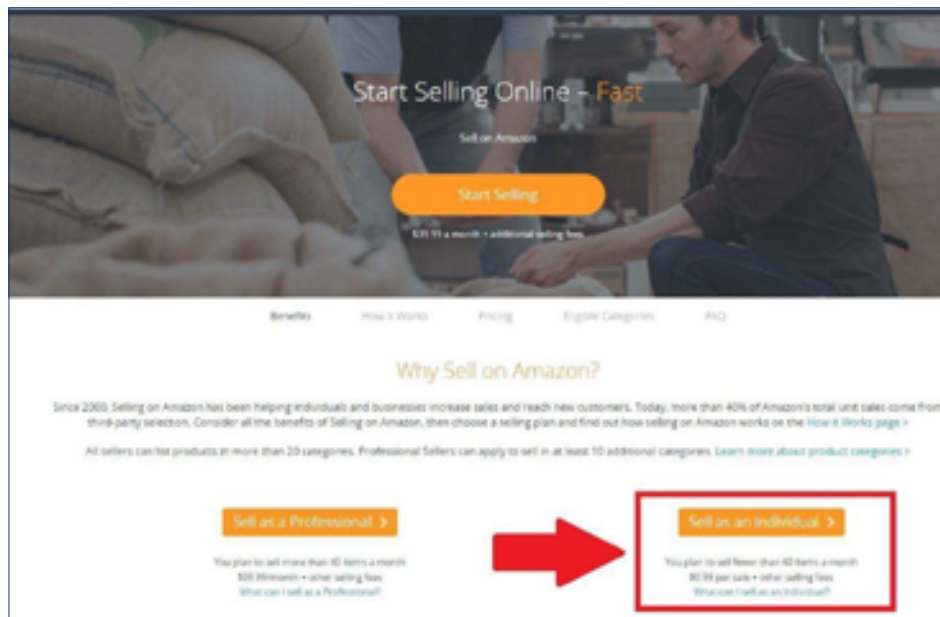
Access a massive audience of confident customers—in the U.S. alone, Amazon has over 150 million monthly unique visitors.<sup>1</sup> Benefit from a brand that ranks #1 in reputation as determined by a 2017 Nielsen Company survey.<sup>2</sup>

**Selling on Amazon >**

Source: <https://startupbros.com/how-to-sell-on-amazon-fba>

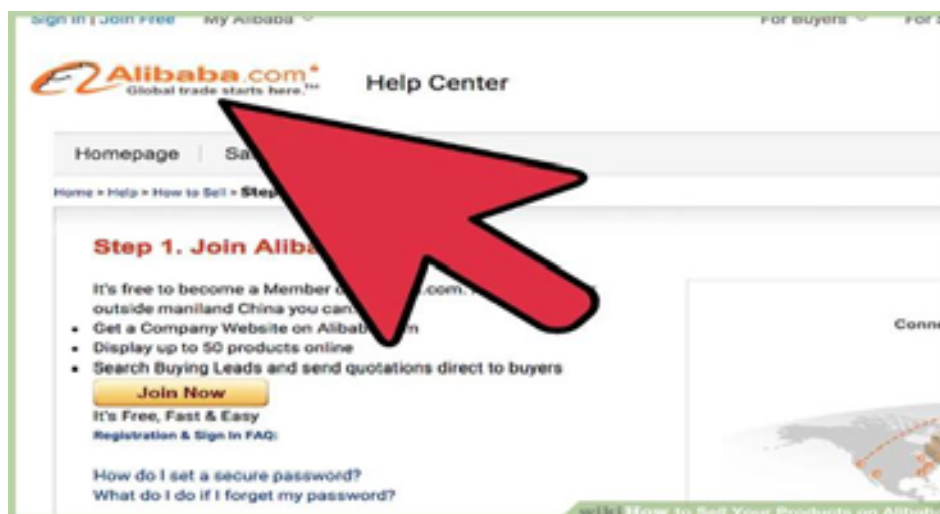
Step 3: Here, you have to select between “Sell as a Professional” or “Sell as an Individual.” **As a beginner, it is recommended to sell as an individual.** Amazon charges a fee per sale. For a professional seller account, Amazon charges a fixed amount per month.





**Step 4:** You have to fill out the required details, and once it is done, you are officially an Amazon Seller.

### 5.3 Registering with Alibaba



• To sell your products on Alibaba here are the few steps you have to follow:

#### 1. Register for Your Account

First, you have to sign up for an Alibaba account. Registering for an account is pretty simple, and all you'll need is a valid email address, your name, location, and phone number of your company. You can pick which account type you would like to have: a seller account; a buyer account; or a hybrid of both.

#### 2. Establish Your Company Profile

After verifying your account using an email address, you have to set up your company profile. This is also known as the company page. This information is essential because this is the information that potential buyers will see.

Generally speaking, you have to enter the following data:

- Type of business
- Location
- Products you plan to sell
- Company size
- Space where you will sell your products or services.

A thorough profile will instill confidence in potential partners, and providing accurate information for your profile will help to secure future business.

### **3. List Your Products**

To sell your products on Alibaba, you should first list them. You should also provide detailed descriptions and images of the products. By giving accurate and thorough descriptions, you can increase product reach and attract potential buyers.

The listing of the products is very important. The amount of products you list plays a prominent role in your success as an Alibaba seller. If your product page includes only between 5 and 10 products, your page will appear empty or incomplete. Further, the more products you have and can link to search results, the more exposure and potential buyers you will attract.

### **4. Be a Quality Communicator**

To maximize Alibaba partnerships, your brand should have a sense of integrity and confidence.

As a seller in an international market, it's vital that you respond and communicate with potential and existing buyers, maintaining healthy relationships that can enhance your business. To help you do this, Alibaba provides a platform to manage communications. You can also install Trade Manager, the Alibaba chat platform that facilitates engagement in real-time with other Alibaba users.

### **5. Consider a Gold Membership**

It's free to join Alibaba, but if you are interested in really exploring some extra things that it offers, then a Gold Membership is worth considering. At present, there are three different Gold Membership Levels: Basic, Standard, and Premium.

Each of these levels offers members their custom webpage, priority rankings in their search results, unlimited posting of products (free memberships cap at 50), and the capacity to quote buying requests.

### **6. Take Advantage of Alibaba Resources**

Alibaba has an excess of educational and training resources that can help business owners make the most of the tools and functionalities that they provide. Alibaba helps your company in expanding the business and taking advantage of international sales opportunities.

Take the time to set up your account the right way and to use the tools and resources made available if you want to excel as an Alibaba seller. [34]

## 5.4 Registering with Daraz.com



- **Sign up as a customer on Daraz.com**

**For Desktop:**

- Click on the **"Sign Up"** button in the top right corner of the screen.
- Provide authentic information.
- Click **"Submit."**

You will receive an email welcoming you to Daraz.

**For the Daraz App:**

- Start up the **"Daraz App."**
- Go to the **"Account"** section at the bottom right corner of the Daraz App.
- Press the **"Login"** button.
- Choose the **"Sign Up"** option.
- Enter your **"Mobile Number"** correctly & press the **"Send"** button for the **"Verification Code."**
- The **"Verification Code"** should be entered & then the **"Next"** button should be pressed.
- Enter your details, such as:
  - ◆ Name
  - ◆ Valid email address
  - ◆ Note: You can also activate the Daraz Wallet when you register on Daraz.



Source: <https://www.apkmonk.com/app/com.daraz.android>

### Other popular e-commerce marketplaces in India include:

1. Gaatha: Gaatha plays a major role in storytelling about artisanal artwork, and also provides a high-quality online platform for artists to sell their products online. <https://shop.gaatha.com/gaatha-Join-us-selling-partner> (Accessed on 06/01/2021)
2. NOVICA: Novica's mission is to create a better world for global artisans by promoting handmade art. It is a win-win exchange as artists receive recognition for their pieces and customers access a database of artists creating high-quality handmade products. <https://www.quora.com/How-artists-get-themselves-registered-with-NOVICA> (Accessed on 06/01/2021)
3. Amazon- Karigar: Amazon Karigar has taken the initiative to provide a platform for artisans working on handicrafts/ handmade products from local places for global international sales on Amazon. <https://services.amazon.in/landing/amazon-karigar.html#> (Accessed on 06/01/2021)
4. Flipkart- Samarth: Flipkart Samarth is an initiative dedicated to empower less-privileged sections of society and non-profits. The program supports inclusion by providing marginalized populations with opportunities for financial independence. Letting business touch and transform lives is the core of Flipkart Samarth. <https://seller.flipkart.com/slp/content/flipkart-samarth> (Accessed on 06/01/2021)
5. Go Coop : Launched in 2014, Go Coop is the first Indian online marketplace to bring together groups of traditional weavers, cooperatives, and buyers. [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd\\_3RpZUigXgQS3Cwluw5rqZysWa6wehGjPK8Cf1hk6\\_-TsBg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd_3RpZUigXgQS3Cwluw5rqZysWa6wehGjPK8Cf1hk6_-TsBg/viewform) (Accessed on 06/01/2021)

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## **South Asia Network on the Sustainable Development Goals (SANS)**

The South Asia Network on the Sustainable Development Goals (SANS) has been developed by ESCAP to foster subregional cooperation by sharing good practices towards achievement of the SDGs amongst the government agencies, think-tanks, CSOs and other stakeholders in South Asia to build back better.

For further details click <https://unescap.org/projects/sans> and for details on SANS membership click <https://unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/8.09.21%20SANS%20Network%20membership%20criteria%20external%20criteria%20final%20rev.pdf>.

